

Counting to 10 and Other Troop Management Tips

from www.girlscouts.org

Five Keys to a Successful Troop/Group

- Adults who actively work in partnership with girls
- A place where girls feel secure, trusted, and valued
- Girls' ownership of activities
- Girls' planning activities
- Girls and adults who respect and like each other



Tips for Working with Girls

- Allow girls to learn by experience.
- Focus on the talents and skills of each girl rather than on her weaknesses or inabilities.
- Encourage girls to solve their own problems, to go to each other for assistance, and to take turns leading the group. Step in immediately if anyone's safety is endangered.
- Help each girl develop positive feelings about herself. Encourage her to feel she is important, both as an individual and as a member of the group. Show respect for each girl's feelings and intelligence. Do not treat her as if she is "just a child."
- Rejoice with a girl when she achieves something important to her—no matter how small.
- Avoid comparing girls.
- Give directions that are understandable to girls of the age level you're working with. Phrase directions positively, rather than negatively.
- Set limits. Make them clear and consistent. Be fair.
- Encourage respect for different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Help each girl express pride in her heritage. Discover ways for the members of your troop to learn about, and have positive experiences with, girls and adults different from themselves.
- Allow and encourage girls to work on projects in pairs or in groups.
- Don't expect every girl to participate in every activity.
- Involve each girl's family whenever appropriate, remembering to place the girl in the center of the activity.
- Share your successes, problems, and resources with other leaders.
- Capitalize on the strengths of older girls by giving them responsibility.

Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts will occur in your troop from time to time. They can be over seemingly small issues, such as who gets to go first for an activity, or over major ones, such as how to spend troop money. Sometimes conflicts have their beginnings in the family or school environment, spilling over into the Girl Scout troop meeting. As Girl Scouts, we can base conflict resolution on the Girl Scout Promise and Law. As sisters in Girl Scouts, we may have conflicts, but we work to resolve them.

Disagreements over issues that affect values or goals need solutions in which both sides win. Girls need to have their self-esteem strengthened, as well as to learn to respect one another. It may be that the troop needs to do together activities that strengthen self-esteem and respect. Age-level books, as well as the Issues for Girl Scouts booklets, have many such activities. Councils have also developed activities and leaders' training for conflict resolution.

Here is a leader's toolbox of techniques for conflict resolution (along with your talking stick*, "It" and "Other" bags, and lots of patience) to use by themselves or in combination with one another. Remember that there is no one way to resolve conflict. If girls become accustomed to dealing with conflict within the troop setting, they will gain skills that last them a lifetime.

Mediation

- The leader or a girl trained in mediation acts as the mediator, explaining that she is there to help the girls in conflict reach a solution.
- Each girl tells her side of the story without interruption, describing the problem and saying what happened.
- Then each girl suggests some possible solutions.
- Together the girls choose one solution that works for both of them.

Active Listening

- The leader or one of the girls acts as "listener," restating or paraphrasing what each of the people involved in the conflict has said.
- Use phrases such as "It sounds like you said..." or "Do you mean...?" to get clarification.
- The listener draws out the main reason for the conflict through the questioning process.
- Once the main reason for conflict is identified, it goes to mediation.

Time Out

- Establish a quiet place where girls in conflict can go for a "time-out" period of specified length. (Girls doing this need to know the steps in mediation.)
- Ask them to return to the leader or group with a solution based upon mediation.

Role Reversal

- Ask each girl in the conflict to state the point of view of the other person so that each can see the other's perspective.
- Discuss possible solutions to the problem from both sides.

Skillful Listening

- Model active and attentive listening.
- Wait (actually pause) after asking a question so a girl has a chance to answer.
- Avoid interrupting girls.
- Be aware of body language (yours and theirs); make your body language and facial expressions match what you are saying.
- Avoid putdowns and sarcasm in talking about anyone, and make sure girls understand that these behaviors are not acceptable.
- Strive for positive communication between yourself and girls.

Tips for Dealing with Unacceptable Behavior

- Have girls define the atmosphere and respect for each other that they would like to have in their meetings. Discuss actions that would be unacceptable to the group.
- Provide a space for individuals who ask for time-out--or a place to remove girls from the group temporarily.
- Focus on the action, not the girl. Have the girl arrive at a solution for her behavior.
- Take time to find out why a girl is acting out. Establish trust so that she feels she can talk to you.
- Stop any action immediately that is endangering an individual or the group. Discuss procedures for handling emergencies with your co-leader and parents.
- Don't say anything in haste or in a way that you might regret at a later date. Count to 10, and remember that you are speaking to an individual child in front of her peers.
- Be fair at all times.

Resources

Available from Girl Scouts councils, council shops, and the Girl Scout National Equipment Service:

- **Issues for Girl Scouts.** A series from Girl Scouts of the USA that concentrates on issues of self-esteem and decision-making.
- **Connections.** For Daisy, Brownie, Junior, and Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts. Helps girls make connections to their own heritage as well as to people who are different from them in areas ranging from race to social status.
- **Girls Are Great.** For Daisy, Brownie, Junior, Cadette, and Senior Girl Scouts. Covers "growing up female" issues, such as self-image, peer pressure, feelings, the media, and health.
- **Media Know-How.** For Daisy and Brownie, Junior, and Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts. Helps girls evaluate the role of the media and look at issues from images to ethics.
- **Read to Lead.** For Daisy, Brownie, Junior, and Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts. Encourages girls to develop their reading and writing skills and use those tools in creative ways to explore the world.

Also helpful:

- **How to Handle a Hard-to-Handle Kid: A Parents' Guide to Understanding and Changing Problem Behaviors**, by C. Drew Edwards (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Press, 1999).
- **Respecting Our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World**, by Lynn Duvall (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Press, 1994).
- **What Kids Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Raise Good Kids**, by Peter L. Benson, Judy Galbraith, and Pamela Espeland (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Press, 1999).

*Talking Stick

Explain to girls that in many Native American tribes, people used a "talking stick" to make sure that each person had a turn to share his or her ideas and opinions with the rest of the group. The person holding the stick had the right to speak. Everyone else was expected to listen with respect. When a person finished talking, he or she passed the stick to someone else.

Have girls sit in a circle and give the stick to a girl who is comfortable speaking to a group. Ask that girl to share something with the troop. You might specify a topic or let girls choose their own. When the first girl finishes sharing, he or she passes the stick to the girl on the right. Tell girls that anyone who doesn't want to speak can simply pass the stick to the next person. Girls should continue passing the stick until each person has had a chance to speak. You might want girls to pass the stick more than once so some of the shyer girls have a second chance to share their thoughts, but don't insist that a girl talk if he or she doesn't want to.

You can use this activity in a variety of situations, including conflicts between two girls who have trouble listening to each other's point of view.

Challenges - Behavior in Groups

from <http://www.angelfire.com/ct/cgrob123/behavior.html>

One of the challenges of being a Girl Scout Leader is working with adults. You interact with parents and guardians of the girls in your troop, co-leaders, assistant leaders, other troop leaders, service team members, council members, etc. You are faced with a wide range of personality types.



Behaviors/Techniques for Coping

The following are a few self-centered and disruptive behaviors that can happen in a group along with a few ideas of "what to do about it". These may help you to be prepared when meetings begin to get off track.

Self Centered Roles and Behavior	Some Ideas for Coping
The Blocker -- Goes off on tangents, consistently argues on points the group has resolved, and rejects ideas without consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Try to focus away from the person exhibiting the behavior. b. Politely point out that the person has strayed away from the topic and refocus on the task you are doing. c. Summarize conclusions to conflicts to avoid argument on the same topic.
The Fighter -- Attacks the motives of others, shows hostility toward the group or some individual without relation to the group's task, and criticizes and blames others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Put a stop to it as gently as possible by getting the person to direct anger toward a topic, rather than a person. b. Point out where the person has been critical and why the criticism is unwarranted. c. Point out that you all share ideas as you work and everyone should be recognized for what they have contributed.
The Pleader -- Proposes own pet concerns beyond reason; attempts to speak for 'the girl,' 'the leader,' etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give the person some attention, then focus on the priorities of the group. b. Ask the person gently to speak only for her self or him self.
The Dominator -- Interrupts the contributions of others; uses authority in manipulating the group or certain members by pulling rank.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give the person a special project. b. Send the person on an errand. c. Add a strong person to the group and encourage more group participation.
The Withdrawer -- Acts passive or indifferent, doodles, whispers to others, and passes notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct questions to the person that you know can be answered. b. Ask the person to lead a discussion. c. Find ways to get the person actively involved with others in the group.
The Talker -- Seeks recognition by extreme ideas and boisterous boasts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use tact to interrupt the flow of talking. Ask specifically for others to comment. b. Indicate that you are happy that the person has so much to share and could others have a chance to contribute. c. Have a private conversation with the person.
The Nit Picker -- Criticizes, finds fault with everything - the room set-up, the typing, and the materials, under the guise of helping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Try to get the person to see that these things do not affect the group that much. b. Ask the person to help with the next session with assurances that you will discuss it later.
The Dependent One -- Overeager to please the leader by doing whatever is expected or desire, waits to be directed, demonstrates little initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ask the person to initiate ideas and give reactions. b. Watch for changes to praise for initiative.

Approaches to Dealing with Difficult Behavior

There are two general approaches to dealing with difficult behavior: working to "cure" the behavior or devising a strategy for coping with the behavior. The goal of the two approaches is the same, to minimize the problem and maximize the use of human resources. Both approaches include the same four steps:

Step One: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Begin by trying to understand the nature of the problem. This means identifying the specific behavior that is unacceptable, determining with whom the behavior surfaces, and how frequently it occurs. Negative behavior that occurs with only one person is probably evidence of a personality conflict, rather than "difficult behavior," and needs to be worked out between the two parties involved.

Step Two: EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIPS

Examining how the difficult person interacts with others gives clues to the possible causes of the behavior. Determining why the behavior occurs and why it is annoying helps point toward possible solutions.

Step Three: DETERMINE THE COSTS

Difficult behavior always carries a cost whether it be in terms of lost productivity, lower morale, or general discomfort. If there is no identifiable cost to you, the person involved, or to others, the behavior should be ignored.

Step Four: SEEK A SOLUTION AND GET AN AGREEMENT WITH AND COMMITMENT TO THAT SOLUTION

Once you have determined that the costs of ignoring the behavior are too high, the issue must be discussed with the offender. Plan out an approach that best fits the nature and gravity of the problem, the personality of the person involved, and your relationship with that person.

- Set up a meeting. Arrange for privacy and sufficient time to address the issue. Select a time when you are calm and have adequately prepared for discussion.
- Describe the difficult behavior in a non-accusatory manner and explain why it concerns you. Focus on a description of specific facts. Avoid offering your opinion as to why the problem exists and stick with a discussion of the problem behavior, rather than the individual's personality. Finally, select only one or two negative behaviors to work on, to avoid overwhelming the person. These should be behaviors the person can do something about.
- Use active listening skills to check your understanding of the problem and its causes. Active listening includes showing empathy ("I can see you are surprised and upset about what I have told you."), asking questions to check your understanding, and restating major ideas ("So we're being criticized because you want to help us do our jobs better, not because our work is no good?"). Passive people need a lot of encouragement to start talking. Wait patiently for them to respond to questions, and hear them out once they have started talking.
- State the change in behavior you are seeking. Be clear about what you want, but be open to changing your goal or solution, if that becomes appropriate.
- Solicit ideas for change and how to accomplish it from the difficult person. He or she will often come up with the best solutions, and will be more agreeable to implementing these solutions than the ones offered by someone else. Express confidence in the person's ability to change. Offer your own solutions if none suggested by the other person are acceptable to you.
- Agree on an action plan. Work towards a solution acceptable to both parties. Get agreement on specific actions you or the other person will take, and set a timetable for these actions. Start with short term, easily attainable goals.
- Set a follow-up date and time. This reminds both parties to review progress on implementing the plan.
- Follow up. Recognize any progress that has been made. If there has been no change in the difficult behavior, reevaluate the action plan and revise it, if necessary.

Problem Solving

What is a problem?

Usually, a problem is the difference between what is happening right now and what a person would like to have happen.

Most problems can be worked out if people are willing to follow a few problem-solving steps. The most important word here is willing. If you think there is a problem, do not wait while you get angry at what is happening. Anger does not solve anything. Positive action will.

- State the Problem – You need to know what the problem really is.
- Explore and understand the problem – What is going on when this problem takes place?
- Decide what you would like to have happen instead of what is happening now.
- What can you do about it?
- Talk about the consequences of each solution. What will happen if you decide to do a certain thing?
- Make a choice – What solution are you going to try first?
- Take action on your choice. Make your choice and do it.
- Evaluate – How did it go? Was the choice you made a good one? Do you need to make another choice?