

Behavior Incentives/Consequences

Before you begin a program, discuss troop rules with the girls. Have a list of your own ready and ask the girls what rules do you think the troop should have. It'd be a good idea to write them down as they are suggested and talk a little about each one and why that rule would be important.

Check them off your list as you go and add any that they didn't mention to the list.

It is difficult to institute a behavior program if the rules aren't first understood by everyone. Once the rules have been discussed, you can talk about behavior programs. Ask the girls their ideas and suggest some on your own. Decide together which program the troop will use. You may at this time decide to also do a behavior contract (sample follows the program suggestions).

Below are some suggested programs:

Blue Spot - The "Blue Spot" can be just a blue piece of construction paper, laminated for durability. If someone misbehaves or causes a disturbance, the leader (without stopping the activity, and usually without a word) would calmly hand the Blue Spot to the offender. She would then take the Blue Spot to a designated table away from everyone and sit until she felt ready to rejoin the group. A rule can be made that if a girl receives 2 Blue Spots in one day, the parent will be talked to about the behavior.

The key is setting this up in advance, during a calm time. This program doesn't call undue attention to the girl (not reinforcing negative attention-seeking behavior) since you never stop what you're doing. Reasons for getting the blue spot should be set up in advance, and involve the girls in making the rules. Occasionally, you may ask very sympathetically, if a girl feels like she needs the blue spot, and let her make the decision herself, depending on the behavior that is trying to be discouraged. And she may request the blue spot for herself if she felt out of control or is just having "one of those days" and sit quietly for a while.

Behavior Candle - Especially symbolic because of the frequent use of candles in GS ceremonies. Buy a tall candle, and put a couple of deep marks into the candle (you may want to burn one at home and time it so you'll have a good idea on how many hours it will burn). At the beginning of each meeting, light the candle. If you have to comment on behavior more than once during a meeting, blow the candle out. When it burns down to one of the marks, the girls can get a treat that has been agreed upon ... a party, special field trip, etc. This method uses peer pressure to enforce good behavior. No one wants to be the reason the candle is blown out. Don't comment, just go and quietly blow it out. Everyone usually knows if they are one of the guilty parties. And if they still misbehave after the candle has been blown out? Tell them that it won't be lit at all the next meeting. You may not have to go that far though. This can be effective for both the younger and older girls.

Three strikes, you're out! - This method also does not reinforce negative behavior, and the plan must be discussed in advance so the girls know what each of the "strikes" represents. A strike is represented by a ticket, token, coin, etc. If a girl is breaking the rules, acting up, etc., just quietly go over to her, with no comment and place a ticket in front of her. Continue what you are doing. If she continues, place a second ticket in front of her. If it is necessary to place the third and final ticket, she is then be instructed to call for a ride home. The third one can be a different color from the rest, or you can come up with your own system.

M & Ms - This method ignores negative behavior and awards positive behavior. This method doesn't even have to be discussed in advance, the girls will catch on quickly. If the girls are working on a particular project which requires on-task behavior, you will be rewarding the ones that stay on-task and ignoring those who do not. Quietly walk around and place a few M&Ms in front of those that are on-task. The girls that are off-task will quickly figure it out and get themselves on-task as well. This can also work with stickers, stars, etc.

Marble Jar - You will need a small jar and some marbles or some other small objects to fill the jar with. You can pre-determine reasons objects are placed in the jar, including, everyone showing up with their assigned work complete, handbooks, vests, on-time, permission slips passed in, etc. You place objects into the jar for these rewards, and you take objects out of the jar for misbehavior. This is flexible and you can add in your own reasons for adding and removing objects. When the jar is full, they receive a reward: a party, field trip, etc. Input from the girls for this program (and all behavior programs) always gives them more of an incentive to follow it.

Situation Jar - Ask each girl to write some "unacceptable situations" on slips of paper. Discuss these situations together as a troop, and after each has been discussed, place the slip into the jar. When the troop is satisfied that they have thought of all the situations they can, they then all agree to avoid these situations. Situations can be added as the year progresses and as they arise. You can refer to it as: "Is this a situation for our jar?" and then write it on a slip of paper and add it to the jar. You could even have the offending girl go to the jar, write the situation and add it to the jar. This does two things: it makes her aware of the situation, and also gives her a chance to remove herself from the situation and creates a "time out", a time to refocus. You may want to add consequences for misbehaving in one of the situations which are in the jar, or for creating new situations, but just the writing it out and adding it to the jar, along with the time-out is usually adequate.

Behavior Contract - The best behavior contracts are ones that the girls develop themselves, with guidance from the leader. You may revise contracts from previous years, or start fresh. They should all include the Promise and Law, the girls' signatures and may or may not include the parents' signatures as well. They are especially helpful when planning for an involved trip, whereby the girls are "earning" the trip, by reason of behavior progression. One troop's behavior contract may differ greatly from another due to meeting accommodations, individual personalities, events being planned, etc. Note that it is best to state a rule in a positive way, for example, instead of saying, "do not run", say "always walk". A sample behavior contract is as follows:

Girl Scout Troop # 303

Behavior Contract

This contract will be in force for all troop meetings, events, field trips, camping, and other activities.

I understand and adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law as follows:

The 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 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

I will also follow the event/activity rules, which will always include the following:

1. A Girl Scout leaves a place better than she found it, therefore, normal cleanup is expected and no vandalism is allowed.
2. Each girl is expected to listen to her leader or adults in charge and respond respectfully to their directions.
3. Each girl agrees to give respectful cooperation to the adults in charge, who have the final say as to the rules.
4. The buddy system will be in force at all times and girls must notify the leader or other adult before leaving the designated meeting area.
5. Girls are expected to learn to think and act for the good of the troop, as opposed to only themselves.
6. Permission to attend field trips will be earned by:
 - A rate of 75% attendance at meetings
 - A proven positive attitude and cooperative, respectful behavior
 - A willingness to do kapers until the work is done.

By adhering to these rules, I realize that the troop will run more smoothly and safely. I understand that failure to follow the guidelines listed may result in my having to leave the event or meeting. My parent will be called to come to the event to pick me up, regardless of the location.

I, _____ have read the above contract and agree to the standards listed.
(name)

Signed: _____
Parent/Guardian

Girl Scout