

Service Unit Leader's Guide for Campouts

Compiled by Barb Hunter Mahan
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Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

Note to users of this packet:

Hi! I'm a Brownie Leader for my daughter and the Troop Committee Chairman for my son's Boy Scout Troop. As an avid backpacker and camper, I normally get out at least one weekend a month. I have to continuously remind myself that others did not "grow up" in the woods, and for many, the prospect of either leading their scouts overnight...or as a parent, letting their little darling go out into the dark woods with -- heaven forbid -- a LATRINE is a significant emotional event!

Thus, I've tried to put together this package that I slightly modify for our Service Unit's Girl Scout encampment each spring (with about 30 troops and 300 folks), for troops going on their first encampment, and I modify it a bit more for first-time Boy Scout parents. This is the basic framework though, and I encourage max editing to benefit your situation. Specifically, you'll find portions that are really just designed for leaders, and portions that are designed just for parents. I highly encourage you to "cut and paste" to make the most of this document.

Much of it came directly from Girl Scout training 212 and 214 (Cook Out and Camp Out), and a lot came from others on the internet. Some of it is common sense, and some of it (like the page immediately following) is just stuff to "make the parents feel good"!!

Enjoy and feel free to email me if you have any questions, comments, or additions.

*Barb Hunter Mahan
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Note to leaders: This is a page I use to “introduce” why and how we camp out for nervous parents!

Encampment 97!

I'm so anxious to take your daughters camping! My best memories of Girl Scouting were from the camping trips I went on. The skills and self-confidence I learned have stayed with me since my first outing *many* years ago. Our Service Unit Encampment is a great “introduction” to camping. The Brownies will sleep in “lodges” (fully enclosed buildings), and the 250+ girls from Silverbrook, Halley and Hayfield who will attend our encampment will have plenty of activities to keep them busy. Hopefully, we will progress from this first experience to many more challenging experiences!

Goals:

- Deepen each girl's awareness of herself as a unique person of worth
- Develop an acute awareness of the environment and the importance of protecting our natural resources
- Increase the skill, maturity and satisfaction of relating to others (teamwork)
- Develop values to give meaning and direction to each girl's life
- Contribute to each girl's attempt to better society through use of her own talents in cooperation with others

Activities and Skills They Will Experience:

- Formal Flag and Campfire Ceremonies, Scouts' Own
- “Kapers”
 - Latrine Duty
 - Identify and mark camp evacuation routes
 - Clean-up details
 - Cooking
 - Measure, mix, prepare and cook
 - Campfires
 - Building fires, fire safety
 - Hostess details
 - Table setting, food presentation and serving, non-denominational grace
- Arts and Crafts
- Skills to gain
 - Cooking
 - Safety (fire, outdoor, personal, etc)
 - Knots and rope tying
 - Knife safety and use
 - Environmental awareness
 - Teamwork

PERSONAL GEAR LIST

IMPORTANT NOTES:

RECOMMEND (WATERPROOF?) DUFFEL BAGS or LARGE BACKPACKS/BOOK BAGS

EACH GIRL CARRIES HER OWN GEAR!!! (She can make more than one trip from the car to the lodge, just make sure she can carry each bag by herself.)

MARK EVERYTHING!!!! (Someone will lose something....)

ONLY CLOTHES/SHOES THAT CAN GET YUCKY, PLEASE!

FORBIDDEN(and why...)

GLASS (no mirrors)	<i>Can break..safety issue</i>
FOOD, GUM, CANDY	<i>Plenty food is available; food becomes a magnet for “critters and bugs”, problems arise when one girl has something and no one...or not everyone else...can share!</i>
PRESCRIPTION OR OVER-THE- COUNTER MEDICATIONS	<i>UNLESS given to First Aider with appropriate documentation Safety! Not only do we need to know what meds they are on, we don't want meds in the wrong hands!</i>
SCENTED PRODUCTS (perfume, etc)	<i>Bug attraction! (and not needed!)</i>
AEROSOL CANS	<i>Bug attraction</i>
HAIR DRYERS, CURLING IRONS, MAKE-UP, NAIL POLISH, etc., etc	<i>Not needed, not the right place for concern over appearance! If scout has pierced ears, only studs are allowed (NO hoops or dangles!!!)</i>

NOT RECOMMENDED (and why...)

No one-piece PJs or <i>warm...</i>	<i>They “ride up” in a sleeping bag, and then girls aren't as</i>
Nightgowns	<i>especially if they have to get up in the middle of the night!</i>
Sandals, thongs, slip-on shoes	<i>Safety: leaves foot exposed to rough ground (sticks, roots, dirt) rocks, dirt) and insects (especially ticks)</i>
Umbrellas	<i>If it rains, we wear ponchos to keep our hands free.</i>
Large towels (bath size and larger)	<i>Too big for kids who won't be taking showers/baths during our two nights out, and takes up duffel bag room!</i>
Nylon jackets	<i>Safety: not that warm and dangerous near fires</i>
pocketknives	<i>Not needed, not safe for Brownies</i>

air mattresses *Most young girls can't blow it up alone, and the leaders aren't going to do it!!!*

watches, necklaces, jewelry *Not needed, can get easily lost/left/dirty/stolen*

money or other valuables *Same as above!*

RECOMMENDED BASICS

_____ Water bottle that hooks to a belt loop or fanny pack (?)

_____ Flashlight (*hint: leader should think about bringing extra "c", "d" and "aa" (although you may want them to go without...there's no reason girls shouldn't bring spare batteries)*)

_____ Plastic bags for wet/dirty things (*hint: put a full day's worth of clothes - socks, underwear, pants, shirt - in a 2-gallon ziploc bag and the scouts can later put each day's dirty clothes in that same bag*)

_____ gloves, hat (*check weather forecast!*)

_____ Small stuffed "friend" (optional)

RECOMMENDED TOILET KIT

_____ Toothbrush/toothpaste

_____ washcloth, small towel, small soap (*or, the leader may chose to get the Troop some liquid soap - much less messy overall!*)

_____ brush/comb/safety pins

_____ tissues, chap stick/lip balm (if needed), non-aerosol bug repellent, sun block (*recommend troop leader consider one can of bug repellent and put it on twice a day - with parent permission, of course - younger kids tend to put on too much or none at all*)

_____ Only metal mirrors, if desired (optional) (NO GLASS!)

RECOMMENDED CLOTHES

_____ scrunchies, ties for long hair (especially needed for camp cooking and campfire)

_____ jeans/long pants

_____ shirts of different weights (to layer throughout the day)

_____ underwear (at least one pair extra beyond what you think they'll need)

_____ Two-piece sleepwear or sweats to sleep in

_____ Jacket, poncho

_____ 2 Bandanna (s) (*important item, used for several things!*)

_____ 2 pair shoes minimum (no sandals)

_____ separate socks for day and night wear

RECOMMENDED GEAR

_____ "Situpon"

_____ Waterproof Bag/duffel to carry gear (suitcases hard to handle)

_____ Sleeping bag or complete bedroll kit

_____ pad/insulator

_____ small pillow (optional) (or pillow case to be stuffed with extra clothes)

DISH KIT

_____ Dunk Bag (*important!* - needs a string, shoelace, etc on it for hanging, too. Lots of parents just “don’t get it” unless they understand how these are used. Show parents what they look like - they can be made out of onion/potato bags, dishwashing rags sewn together or lingerie bags)

_____ sturdy plastic plate, bowl and mug (with handle) (*suggest plates from frozen microwave foods, butter tubs for bowls, etc. Also, garage sales are excellent sources!* Leader hint: bring one full extra dish kit - someone will forget something)

_____ sturdy plastic (no picnicware) or metal flatware (knife, fork and spoon)

OPTIONALS

_____ Camera (*name on camera, please!!!*)

_____ Sunglasses

TROOP SUPPLIES

By the time you go to camp, each troop needs to round up a lot of supplies. Eventually, most troops hope that some can be permanently donated to the troop, but the rest can be “loaned”, and whatever you still need may have to be bought out of troop funds. You should consider asking your parents if they have an item they can donate or loan. The items in the Troop Camping Supply List are a good basic list for any overnight scout “car camping” (you’d never be able to backpack these items in!)

Ideally, the troop would permanently “own” all these items, and they would be stored, ready to go at a moment’s notice (a large, heavy-duty Rubbermaid container works great). Short of a generous benefactor, you’ll have to slowly build your kit up. Remember to tell parents that if they “loan” certain items (like a pot), it may not come home in the same condition once it is used to cook over an open fire!

What follows is a Troop Camping Supply Chart. Obviously, not all items are needed on every trip, but an old rule of thumb is “you can never have too much aluminum foil”!

TROOP CAMPING SUPPLY LIST

	LEADER/FIRST AIDER		toilet paper (in cans/ziploc bags)		measuring cups
	Key to Site		sanitary supply can		handwash
	Troop event packet		hand wash		aluminum foil
	First Aid Kit		route markers		animal-proof coolers
	Evacuation markers		DISHWASHING		animal-proof containers
	emergency car signs		3 dishpans		OTHER
	driver packets and parking signs		scraper/scrubie		kaper charts
	FIRE AND STOVE		handwipe		handwash for First Aid
	metal bucket		detergent/bleach		rope/twine (min 8-10 ft)
	hot mitts/gloves (for fire use)		trash bags		2 gallons backup water
	rake, shovel, bow saw		ecology bag		flag w/rope/holder
	grate		paper towels		lanterns w/fuel
	4-6 #10 cans w/foil		KITCHEN		radio/phone
	matches/fire starters in waterproof can		menus/recipes to post		dining fly

	sprinkle can		meal ingredients		newspapers
	kindling, tinder		large pot		masking tape/duct tape
	plastic for woodpile		skillet		scissors/black marker
	charcoal in waterproof can		skewers/twigs		swaps (optional)
	charcoal chimney starter		hamburger rack		tents (optional)
	tongs for coals		long-handled utensils		chair (optional)
	box oven - 4 cans/shelf		hot pads/mitts (for cooking use)		
	vagabond stoves/burner		cutting boards		BADGEWORK
	grease can w/lid		knives		badgebook
	propane stove + fuel		peelers		glue
	baking soda in fireproof can		funnel		crayons
	work gloves (leather)		can openers (punch and rotary)		pencils
	LATRINE		pitchers		paper
	disinfectant		plastic ziplock bags		
	sponge/brush		mixing bowls/spoons		
	broom, dustpan		plastic tablecloths		
	rubber gloves		paper towels		

PARENT BRIEFING

Strongly recommend calling all parents together no less than one month before encampment so they have time to assemble/acquire necessary gear and gain an understanding of what you'll be doing with (to) their daughter!

Permission slips

- REALLY important on overnight trips - emergency contacts are ESSENTIAL!
- All families should have maps to our camp

In case of serious sickness or serious homesickness, **or serious behavior problems**, they may be asked to pick up their daughter

- REALLY need to know for sure all allergies, meds, etc - recommend letting all parents review the health form they filled out

Need "Contact Parent" (they'll call everyone in event of emergency and to give the official "arrive home" time to all parents)

Sleeping Bags

- Explain the difference between "slumber" bags and "sleeping bags" (slumber bags normally have cartoon characters and are meant for in-the-house sleepovers) Show examples (slumber bag, heavy bag, hollofil, etc) (If families only have slumber bags, extra blankets will be needed) (HINT: ask others if they have sleeping bags for loan).

- Does scout know how to roll up their bag? Parent should have a "work around" if they can't. Recommend nylon "belts" or "straps" sold in outdoor sections of camping stores or places like Kmart and Wal-Mart (designed for use on backpacks, etc.). Encourage parents NOT to tie up bags with twine or string. Inevitably, they are tied in knots impossible to untie!

- Girls have to carry their own bags!

Pads/Insulation

- Show examples, if possible (open foam, closed foam, self inflating, etc.)
- Not just for comfort--need for warmth

Knife Safety

- Won't be using, but good time to discuss

Fire Safety

- From how to light a match to building fires (and extinguishing them)
- Lots of safety messages

Kaper Charts

- Show jobs expected of kids (latrines, etc.)

Typical Day Schedule

Personal Gear list

- Show examples of good/bad

Dish Kit (Again, show examples and give them ideas)

- Can be Cheap! (butter tubs, microwave frozen dinner plates, etc)
- Must have a Dunk Bag WITH a shoelace or string to hang it up!

Foods

- This is what we'll eat: are there any known problems? Allergies? Cultural issues?

- Girls will do lunch as a troop

- Need sack lunch for dinner on Friday night? Or troop meal?

- Remember: No other food to be packed!

Equipment at leader's/driver's home the night before (or 2 nights before, etc)

- Each girl should show they can carry their stuff

- Gives the leader a chance to review stuff before we arrive at camp to discover something important is missing

- Lets drivers best load up car instead of first arrival's stuff on the bottom, etc.

If there's a big soccer game/ballet recital, parents are welcome to come pick them up and return them during the encampment

Dealing With Homesickness

Inevitably, homesickness will strike one of your campers sooner or later. It comes in all forms, all ages. On a boy scout backpack trip into the woods, I had a huge, strapping 7th grade boy in tears one night, mainly because he knew his grandfather was dying, but because of that, he was terribly homesick. More often, it's that first night where a girl is REALLY away from home. Here are some ideas off the internet to help you when deal with homesickness.

Date: Fri, 7 Mar 1997 23:33:02 -0500

From: Ed Byron <edndori@IAVBBS.COM>

Subject: Re: Homesick Camper

Having been a VERY homesick 5th grade camper some 40 years ago. I think I can speak to this. What worked for me was to get me interested in caring for some kittens that lived under the directors tent. (I don't think there were actually any kittens, I never saw them). I have used this trick on many, many girls with variations and it always seems to work. Give them a reason to stay in camp and they keep them busy and they will soon get over it. Unfortunately homesickness seems to peak about day 3 of any outing so on a weekend they simply don't have time to get over it. Whatever you do, don't call the parents or give in unless there is no other way. Stories and singing till they all fall asleep helps the really bad time.

Dori

Fair Winds Girl Scout council Flint MI

Date: Sat, 8 Mar 1997 09:37:25 -0500

From: A Eyer <4ae1@QLINK.QUEENSU.CA>
Subject: Homesickness

After having to deal with this many times I find one of the best things to do is to find out what the girl wants to do. Keep them extremely busy during the day with stuff they like to do. Then at night the chances of being homesick are less because they are so tired they fall asleep faster.

Another trick a camp nurse once taught me was to mix a little Jell-O powder (or any drink crystals) with some warm water. Have them take small sips while you get them talking about anything that interests them. I guess this calms the nervous stomach and that green homesick medicine only works if, they go right to sleep and don't tell anyone else!

Have you tried getting them to write letters home, to parents, pets, whatever. You don't necessarily have to mail them but let them know if you are not.

Sometimes giving them a special job to do helps. Like looking after those kittens under the tent that aren't there. Or being in charge of wake up calls or making sure there is water out to drink or something that if they were not there doing that job it just wouldn't get done.

Remember, if it works for one kid it may not for another. Just don't get upset at the child.

Amanda
4ae1@qlink.queensu.ca

Date: Sat, 8 Mar 1997 22:41:40 -0500
From: Regina Dhanani <CAMP4EVR@AOL.COM>
Subject: Re: WAGGGS-L Digest - 7 Mar 1997 - Special issue

In a message dated 97-03-07 22:22:26 EST, you write:

<<I would be interested in hearing possible remedies to this situation as well. At our most recent camping trip in February, we also had a homesick 5th grader. Being too much of a softy, I probably spent too much time sitting next to her cot trying to comfort her and trying to talk her through her feelings. Mary Ann >>

In February we had our Junior Jamboree, and I also had a 5th grader who was extremely homesick. On Friday night, she wouldn't stop crying for 2 hours. I talked with her, and told her it was okay to feel that way, and comforted her, so she wouldn't feel like she was bad because she was crying to go home. After this I just went about my business, and she followed me everywhere. After about an hour, she just stopped crying, and starting watching all the girls. I think she realized that everyone was having fun, and it's okay that she does too.

She went and played with everyone for the next hour, then she told me that she didn't want to call her mom tonight. I said okay...and nothing more. Later she told me she changed her mind and wanted to call her. Again I said okay, and let her. She spoke for a few minutes, started crying, but she was okay. She didn't say she wanted to go home, and I breathed a sigh of relief. For the rest of the night, I had my doubts, but she did okay. The next day, not a word about mom and home. She was my shining star that weekend. I think she appreciated camping more than anyone.

I decided to not treat her different from the other girls, but that I was available if needed. I think that made her feel comfortable.

I hope this helps everyone, it sure was a learning experience for me.

Regina Dhanani
Broward County GSC, Florida

From the editor: I keep a couple of hard candies with me when I go camping. (I used to use Sucrets, but I don't want to violate *Safety Wise* by giving them unauthorized medicines). The homesickness sometimes shows up in the form of "I have a tummy ache/sore throat" - so out comes my "medicine" - the hard candy. They're often looking for the very personal, specific attention, so if I can sit with them for a minute and talk about great camp things we did that day, it helps. Once, I tried to use logic, and it was a disaster with the girl who was homesick. In my tired, sleep-deprived state, I told her that we were a good hour away from her home, it would take me 20 minutes to even get to a pay phone, and by the time her mom got here to pick her up it would be morning, so she might as well go to sleep, as there was no way she was going home at whatever-past-midnight the time was...of course, this only made things worse...). Overall, I've found that focused attention works wonders

Last, but not least.....

Please have a serious session with your parents at least a month before camp to go over the above items. Talk to them about what "stuff" the girls need to have, show them examples, have sources for them to buy (if they need/want to), and perhaps have arrangements to borrow items from others, so that no one has to run out and buy a new sleeping bag, etc. This is the time to find out from the parents if the girl has ever been at a sleepover before (e.g., will this be her first night ever away from Mom and Dad?) and what kind of sleeper is she? At that age, some kids crash every night at 9pm no matter what, and others will still be whispering at midnight. On our first campout, we probably would have called 911 if one of our girl's moms hadn't told us how heavy a sleeper her kid is and how hard it is to wake her! Also, ask (and this can be confidential answers) if

you have any bed-wetters or sleepwalkers, etc. Also, give them back the health histories to review, and have them commit to a for-real number where they can be reached that weekend and/or emergency contact!!!! Below is a questionnaire some have used for the BROWNIES to fill out (but you may want to have one for parents, too!)

Leave one of your parents behind as a POC with a map, and give every family a map, in case a parent is forced to come pick up their incredibly homesick darling. Be ready for homesickness, and adapt your approach to the girl and the situation.

Moms can often have serious concerns, too - I try to allay those fears with photos of what the facilities normally look like (but photos of the actual camp are best!)

Pay careful attention to your schedule. Will you allow some free "play" time? (We finally did on our last campout, and the girls loved it). Outdoor Fun and/or Outdoor Adventure are perfect Try-Its for your campout. Be ready for the unexpected! Something you did not plan for WILL happen. It will rain when the forecast is for 80 degrees and sunshine; a key meal ingredient will be forgotten behind. Remember: none of these bumps in the road will cause you and your campers to starve or die, so just shrug it off and adapt! **YOU WILL HAVE A BLAST** (with good pre-planning!) Have fun!

Are You Ready for the Campout?

1. Do you want to go?
2. Are you afraid of being away from home or from your parents overnight?
3. Are you willing to play with all of the girls & not just your best friends?
4. Are you okay with:
 - using a public restroom?
 - darkness?
 - night noises?
 - bugs & small animals?
5. Do you always have to have your own way or can you give in sometimes?
6. Do you mind sharing a tent/cabin?
7. Can you cooperate in a group?
8. Can you stop talking & listen to directions?
9. Can you follow a kaper chart?

10. Are you willing to help with outdoor cooking?
11. Are you willing to clean up after yourself & do dishes?
12. Can you roll a sleeping bag?
13. Can you take turns & not have to be first every time?
14. Can you manage with less privacy than at home?

The questions are based on info about camping readiness in a **GREAT** GSUSA book called Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting. GSCNC normally carries this and other related books and materials available for leaders.