Tips for In-Person Girl Scout Activities during COVID-19

Use the following tips for conducting in-person Girl Scout activities during the coronavirus pandemic. All in-person meetings must follow Governor Abbott’s Minimum Standard Health Protocols and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, which together form the basis of the GSNETX In-Person Activity Guidelines, along with Girl Scouts of the USA guidance. When meeting in person, be sure to follow all current guidance and keep in mind that no in-person meeting is completely safe, even when guidelines are followed. Girl Scouts might look and feel a little different year but that’s ok!

Meeting Outdoors

It’s hot outside in Texas in the summer and fall. But meeting in the morning or in the evening makes getting together outside possible. Some locations to consider include:

- Parks and trails
- City hall, county court, or other government office grounds
- Parking lots - for example: church, school
- A troop member’s yard or driveway
- Pavilions
- School fields - baseball, softball, soccer, football

Contact your city’s government offices or local outdoor locations to determine if other open spaces are available and be sure to know your local community’s guidelines. When planning, consider whether restroom facilities are available and let participants know ahead of time. Encourage girls to bring their own water bottles to make sure everyone stays well-hydrated. Consider bringing pop-up tents to provide shade and help designate participant “zones” to maintain social distance requirements.

Meeting Indoors

Health officials suggest coronavirus is spread more easily indoors than outdoors. However, meeting indoors in large a space that allows for social distancing is still possible. Some options could include:

- Basketball courts, cafeterias, or gyms at recreation centers or schools
- Places/Houses of worship
- Library activity rooms
- Community rooms at banks, fire stations, or grocery stores
- Retail store classroom spaces, especially craft stores like JoAnn Fabrics and Michael’s

Availability of these meeting spaces varies by community. The meeting site should be cleaned and disinfected by adults, following CDC guidelines, before and after the meeting.

Helping Girls Manage Social Distancing

Younger girls may need some help in remaining safely distanced. Consider clearly marking each girl’s personal space so the troop can more easily follow social distancing rules.

- Have each girl sit or stand in her own hula hoop or on her own beach towel or picnic blanket
- Use sidewalk chalk or lay down tape to draw a “personal space” square for each meeting participant. Using sidewalk chalk, girls can decorate their own square while you meet!
Managing Group Size Limits for Larger Troops
Larger troops can meet by dividing into teams of 10 or fewer and having the teams stay separated. For example, a multi-level troop may divide into smaller groups by program grade level or a troop of 16 can split into two groups of 8, though the groups should not intermingle during a single meeting. Consider having designated separate parking areas or staggered arrival times to ensure team do not mix together. Be sure to submit the 2020-2021 GSNETX Activity Approval Request Form and receive approval before planning any gatherings larger than 10 people in one location, even if they will be broken into teams of 10 individuals or fewer.

Girl Scout Traditions at a Distance
You can still do some of the traditional Girl Scout activities, no matter the distance- sing a song, recite the Promise and Law, and even the famous Girl Scout Friendship Squeeze. Instead of holding hands, when the “squeeze” gets to her she can:

- Do a hand motion or dance move
- Use a noise maker or musical instrument (actual or DIY)
- Tug on a piece of yarn that is spread out for the girls

Planning Socially Distanced Group Activities
Badge-earning steps are certainly on the list of activities that can be managed following health safety guidelines, but consider some of these additional options, as well.

- Drive-in Movie – each girl stays in the car with her caregiver, but go as a troop
- Drive-through zoo or safari - each girl stays in the car with her caregiver, but go as a troop
- DIY “drive-in” or “drive-through” events
- Picnic or tea party – each girl brings her own food and drinks but eat together as a group. You can suggest everyone follows the same recipe, tries something new, or sticks to a theme.
- Daytime activities like geocaching, bike riding, kite flying
- Nighttime activities like stargazing
- Yoga
- Obstacle course races– (think: run to this line, hop on one foot through these squares, turn around three times in this circle, jump until you cross the finish line)
- Butterfly release - purchase caterpillars, watch them crystalize, then meet to release
- SWAPS – make SWAPS to leave on neighbors’ porches to show you’re thinking of them
- Check locally for group-oriented community service projects, as well. For example, some communities are looking for volunteers to hand out food at food pantries or schools while following social distancing protocols.

Do you have other creative ideas on how you are making in-person activities work right now? Please send them to us at connect@gsnetx.org so we can share them with other volunteers.

Shout out to our friends at Girl Scouts of Central Texas and Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council for many of these ideas!