

Recruit Parents to Help Your Girl Scout Troop Today!

You know those parents who always step up, lend a hand, and bring the fun to your Girl Scout troop? Wouldn't it be amazing if more followed their lead and signed up to volunteer?



Girl Scout troop leader Richel Newborg is never short on volunteers, but not because she's lucky—she puts in the effort to bring them into the fold. After reading her tried-and-true tips on Girl Scouts of Northern California's blog, [The Trailhead](#), we knew we had to spread her wisdom throughout the Movement. Check out Richel's advice in her own words below, follow her lead, and watch as your troop gets all the support you could ever need!

1. Set an expectation that everyone volunteers and we are in this together.

My first opportunity to let parents know I need their help is when new members join the group. We always welcome each new member and their family at the girls' first troop meeting. I introduce key members of our troop leadership and I let parents know that they will be asked to volunteer for at least one thing. Usually I list in writing which things I know I'll need help with and a brief description of what duties are involved. This way parents are free to select what interests them.

Some of these jobs might be helping pack for the camping trip, cookie mom, bringing snacks, or cutting out pieces for SWAPS. Your troop will have different positions depending on how you expect your year to unfold, so customize your own list according to your needs. Let everyone know that by pitching in and helping even with a small task means no one is responsible for all the work and it balances out across the board. It's an important lesson for the girls to learn too.

A few jobs you might need filled in your troop are:

- Troop Money Manager
- Troop Cookie or Nut Manager
- Troop First Aid/CPR Manager
- Snack Planning
- Carpool Drivers
- Troop Camp Certified Volunteer
- SWAPS Volunteer
- Community Outreach
- Event Planning (bridging ceremonies, holiday parties, Court of Awards, etc.)
- Troop Helper

2. Use a family talent survey and require every family to fill one out.

This is a survey where parents are asked about their own Girl Scout background as well as what talents and tasks they may be able to help with. From this you can learn a lot about who's on your team! When my girls' parents completed their surveys, I quickly discovered we had tons of parents with camping gear and the skills to go with it. We also learned 10 parents were CPR certified and 2 worked in the medical field. Go through your roster and make sure every parent has responded, and remind non-responders that this is one way you can get to know them and learn how they all can support the troop.

3. Plan a family event and then fit the job to the personality.

When you host a fun family event, you'll quickly learn a lot about the parents in your troop. It's true that some folks love to be in front of kids, some have great teaching skills, while others are terrified, and don't know what to do. At our family events we make sure to have a mix of activities, games and teambuilding-type activities that everyone participates in with their girls.

This gives everyone an opportunity to have fun together and you'll quickly know everyone's personalities from how they participate.

4. Ask parents personally for their help.

In the age of social media and email, avoid the mistake of asking for volunteers by a broadcast email. That approach almost never works and will only cause you frustration. It's also important that you refrain from complaining publicly about a lack of volunteers in your troop. Honestly, nothing scares off helpers faster than someone that's complaining!

Instead address parents in a small group or in a one-on-one conversation. Make sure you speak with a positive tone and avoid being confrontational. Campouts, BBQs, and events that are geared to be "mixers" are a perfect time to ask, because parents tend to be relaxed and not stressed about their other obligations. Don't feel like you have to fill every role by the end of your first month of meetings. Some people may need to get to know you and your group before they step up.

5. Once someone says yes, follow up and set them up for success.

As soon as you can, you'll also want to contact the volunteer to give them all the information they need to be successful. You'll also need to let them know if there is any training specific to their position that they will need to attend or complete such as a background check.

For instance, a dad that wants to take the lead on camping trips needs to not only register as an adult and get a background check, he'll also need to take Troop Camp Leadership (TCL) training. A mom who said she wants to help with cookies might need to attend an online training or come to a Community meeting to get information on how a Girl Scout Cookie sale works. Since some of these trainings can be done online and some must be done in person, it's important to provide them with this information. Check www.girlscouts-swtx.org for the best online resources, and to find out about in person trainings.

6. Recognize the volunteer right away.

Once someone says they will help, make sure you thank them. I like to write a personal note and hand it to them at the next meeting. Also at the next troop meeting, in front of all the parents and girls, announce the new volunteer's role. Then ask everyone to thank him or her for stepping up and helping support the troop. This makes the newcomer feel great about volunteering and makes it a bit tougher to back out! It also lets the girls know they have a team supporting their Girl Scout experience throughout the year!

Follow these tips and keep a positive attitude and you'll quickly learn that there are many parents that want to help!

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