

How to Start a Troop on a Shoestring Budget

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LEADER SUPPLIES

- Leader's Guide
- Age Level Handbook
- Age Level "badge" book
- Safety-Wise (1/troop provided)
- Storage box (bought, or photocopy paper box, or a wheeled suitcase you have) Some leaders use a wheeled luggage cart if they have them or can get them
- Sharpies (multiple colors, if possible)
- Big scissors
- Tissues / Kleenex
- First Aid kit - see below on how to stock

INCOME

- Start up grant from Service unit or Council, if available
- Dues (decided by girls, often based on cost of badges and patches)
- Start up fee from parents: should cover the first batch of pins, patches, etc

SUPPLIES

- Look in your own cupboard. If you buy new crayons or markers each year for personal use, you may have a lot of boxes sitting around! Same with craft supplies
- Watch garage sales and thrift stores for supplies. Don't be afraid to mention that it is for a Girl Scout troop - some people will give discounts or donate.
- Be ingenious - leaders have used one of those beaded car seat covers as source material. For example - knotty people swap - <http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/9092/knotpeop.html>
- Suggest a "supply swap" at your next Service Unit meeting - each leader brings items and craft materials no longer used, and goes home with a supply of new things

PAPER/PHOTOCOPIES

- Ask parents for old office letterhead, and use the back. Great for drawing, paper airplanes, and such.
- Some companies will let employees use the printer/copier for the cost of paper, or for free as community service. See if one of your parents can do this.

GIRL SUPPLIES

1. Have each girl bring in her own supplies in their own box, or buy a box of zippered bags and each girl gets her own bag. Have them contain:

- scissors
- crayons
- markers
- pencil
- glue or glue sticks
- paint set (optional)

2. Ask parents for donations of excess craft materials, then base the crafts on what is available.

3. If a badge calls for something special, have each girl bring that item in (i.e. Oatmeal container for Space Explorer, shoebox for Me & My Shadow)

4. Ask parents to save things - we ask parents to save certain items for future use (i.e. the tabs off Kool-Aid bursts for SWAPS, Snack-to-Go containers for when we make trail mix later this year, old letterhead)

5. Divide the girls into smaller groups - one per supervising adult. If one group cuts while another glues, then you need half the number of scissors and glue sticks.

6. Borrow what you can! Both parents and other leaders might help.

CHEAP GIRL SCOUT ACTIVITIES

- Sing songs
- Practice a flag ceremony (some service units and the council have flags they can loan).
- Do service projects, like planting flowers at a fire or police station
- Volunteering time with an animal shelter, soup kitchen, meals on wheels, at a nursing home or working at the council camps - great tie ins to badges
- Schedule one meeting to just go to the playground, eat a sack dinner and PLAY! Girls have a great time.
- Pretend you're tourists and "visit" your town, hitting all the tourist destinations. Stop at the local ice cream parlor for a treat on the way home.
- When the weather gets nicer, get outside the meeting place and practice putting up, taking down, (not losing parts) and putting away tents so the girls are ready for tent camping during the summer.

JULIETTE LOW BIRTHDAY PARTY OR TROOP SHOWER

Our parents donated items for our Juliette Low birthday party. I provided a list of suggested items that could be used for crafts, supplies or our First Aid kit. Each girl brought in an item, wrapped, and then took turns unwrapping them. They enjoyed opening the gifts for our troop.

A game can be made of the unwrapping:

Each girl held her wrapped gift and we started the "Left/Right" story and passed gifts this way. When the story was done, each girl was holding a different gift and got to open "her" present. What wasn't supplied for the first aid kit, I got the hospital to donate supplies. An example of the story is at

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/1132/stories.html>