

Opening and Closing a Meeting or Activity

There are many kinds of ceremonies in Girl Scouting. Ceremonies reinforce values, pass on traditions, recognize accomplishments, strengthen friendships and give life to the beliefs established by the Girl Scout Promise and Law. They are a means for girls to express their feelings, friendship, patriotism and service. Like much of Girl Scouting, there are a few hard and fast rules for planning and carrying out ceremonies; what really counts is that the girls do the planning, that everyone participates and that the occasion has special meaning for the participants.

Every meeting should have an official opening and closing that tells girls the meeting is about to begin or end. Meeting openers are a way to develop a sense of unity in the troop and the routine can be as unique to your troop as your girls want it to be. Often leaders or designated girls ask troop members to sit or stand in a circle or horseshoe formation. Examples of suggested opening activities are: reciting the Girl Scout Promise, a simple flag ceremony, a Girl Scout song (serious or silly!), the sharing of a favorite poem or each girl sharing something special about her day.

For closing, often girls gather in a friendship circle and sing “Taps” or “Make New Friends”. Some variations include a friendship circle with the passing of a hand squeeze.

To make a friendship circle and pass a friendship squeeze, stand with the girls in a circle and cross your right arm over your left, then link hands with the Girls Scout standing beside you. To pass a friendship squeeze determine who will start the squeeze. This person should silently think a happy thought for the girl next to her and gently squeeze her hand. That girl will do the same and squeeze the next girl’s hand until the squeeze has gone all the way around the circle. Once the squeeze returns to the start, the Girl Scout starting the squeeze dismisses the group.

Other closing ideas include making an archway. Girls make two lines facing each other, then reach up making arches with their arms; the pair farthest from the door goes through under the arches, then the next pair, etc. The last two go out under the arch made by the two adult leaders.

Opening and closing a meeting may be considered one of the simplest and least formal types of ceremony. Meeting openers and closers are usually very informal and short-about 5 minutes or less.