girl scouts
of northern indiana michiana

Tips & Advice for Multi-Level Troops
20 minutes

> Having a multi-level troop can offer some benefits to Girl Scouts but also may come with a few challenges. If presenting to a group, distribute the attached handout. Share the introduction. Review the handout tips and advice. Finish up with the closing.

What is a Short & Snappy?
- Short training or informational opportunity provided at a Community meeting or for individual learning.
- Any interested volunteer may lead/read a Short and Snappy.
- Short and Snappys are usually 10-45 minutes in length.

What You Will Need
- ☐ Short and Snappy outline
- ☐ Sign–in sheet
- ☐ Handout

Things to Remember
- Have participants sign a sign-in sheet and submit it to your local service center.
- Stay within the allotted time.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, seek the correct answer from the appropriate support person.

Questions? Comments?
Contact the Answer Center
800-283-4812, ext. 2
www.gsnim.org

1. Introduction: Volunteers become engaged with multi-level troops for many reasons. Perhaps a troop leader or family has daughters in different grade levels. Or perhaps the community or school just isn't large enough to support multiple troops.

Many times older girls (Cadette, Seniors, and Ambassadors) choose to join into a single troop because their individual troops would be very small. Whatever the reason, multi-level troops may serve a purpose that meets the needs of the volunteers and girls.

Multi-level troops offer a chance for younger girls look up to older girls. Bringing them together in a multi-level troop setting provides younger girls with role models of every age (as long as everyone is modeling the Girl Scout Promise and Law).

In addition older girls have the opportunity to put their leadership skills into action as they mentor younger girls. Many badge and Journey activities suggest that older girls (even Brownies) work with younger ones on service projects, to teach skills, to play games, etc.

Girls are grouped by grade level nearly everywhere else – school, sports, Sunday school. A multi-level environment allows girls to interact with a more diverse group and make new friends! And a multi – level troop can pool resources across several grade levels. On the other hand, multi – level troops can also come with its own set of challenges.

2. Sharing: Review the attached handout containing tips and advice.

3. Closing: So having a multi-level troop can be a great experience for both the girls and adults involved. It may allow you to serve more girls in your area and it gives the girls a more diverse Girl Scout adventure. It gives the younger girls older girls to look up to and it give the older girls a chance to try out their leadership skills. Eventually if your troop grows, along with your adult support, you may want to consider branching off into individual troops. But for now, just keep these tips and advice in mind while leading your multi-level troop.

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Tips & Advice for the Multi-Level Troop

- Select one Troop Manager to provide the singular vision for the troop direction, ensuring a consistent and standardized approach is applied and maintained through all program grade levels.

- If possible, have at least one adult (or more) assigned to work with each specific grade level in the troop who reports to the troop manager.

- Open all meetings together, then break out into grade level patrols, and, finally, close together in a large Friendship Circle.

- Alternately, you could have one combined meeting per month, and then separate into grade level meetings the rest of the time.

- If the activities for badge work or a Journey overlap grade levels, such as interviewing a person about a particular job, do it together. This will take close planning and communication between your girls and the leadership team of the troop.

- Use a Volunteer Toolkit Year Plan that is specifically designed for multi-level troops. Or consider having all the grade levels do the same Journey series at the same time. For example, all grade levels working in the "It's Your Planet - Love It" or "It's Your Story - Tell It" series at the same time to provide consistency in the theme. Likewise, is there any reason that you could not sync up your badges as well? For example, all grade levels working on "Girl Scout Ways" or "First Aid" at the same time. Also, why couldn't Juniors work on "Simple Meals" while Cadettes work on "New Cuisines"?

- Be sure girls are involved in a Girl Led manner in the planning, but take care to make sure they don't mix up their grade level requirements. Often when they get into a large group they don't remember that they have read different books with different themes and will plan a project together accidently using both Journey topics at the same time.

- Be sure that older girls do a mature level of work because sometimes they can try to get by on a Brownie load and therefore are not challenged to progress in building their skills.

- Ensure that older Girl Scouts, such as Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors have time and space to be with their own peers. They may want and need a safe and confidential space in which they can share concerns and sensitive issues that may not be appropriate in settings with younger girls.

- Be sure to support older Girl Scouts in selecting and participating in activities and council programs that are just for them.

- Allow Girl Scout Ambassadors to have ownership of projects and activities they develop and implement with younger girls. Also give them ownership of the activities they plan for themselves.

- Ensure that the role of the Program Aide is just one small part of their activity in the multi-level troop.

- And most of all - ensure that older Girl Scouts are provided the guidance and support needed to work on their own achievements and leadership experience journey. Don't use them as babysitters for the younger girls.