Important Ceremonies in Girl Scouting

**Bridging ceremonies** mark a girl's move from one level of Girl Scouting to another.

**Closing ceremonies** finalize the meeting, with expectations for the next. This may be as simple as a hand squeeze around the circle, or a song.

**Court of Awards** is a time to recognize girls who have accomplished something during the Girl Scout year.

**Flag ceremonies** can be part of any activity that honors the American flag.

**Fly-Up** is a bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies who are bridging to Girl Scouts Juniors. Girls receive the Girl Scout pin along with their Girl Scouts Brownie wings.

**Founder's Day or Juliette Low's Birthday, October 31**, is a time to remember the important role Juliette Low played in the development of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States.

**Girl Scout Birthday ceremonies** can be held on or near March 12, the date Juliette Gordon Low started Girl Scouting in the United States of America.

**Girl Scout Bronze Award Ceremony** honors Girl Scouts Juniors who have earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award and is usually held at the troop/group level or combined with council recognition.

**Girl Scout Gold Award Ceremony** honors Girl Scouts who have earned the highest award in Girl Scouting and often takes place at council level.

**Girl Scout Silver Award Ceremony** honors Girl Scouts who earn the Girl Scout Silver Award and is often combined with the Girl Scout Gold Award Ceremony at the council level.

**Girl Scouts' Own** is a girl-planned program that allows girls to explore their feelings around a topic, such as friendship or The Girl Scout Promise and Law using the spoken word, favorite songs, poetry, or other methods of expression. It is never a religious ceremony.

**Investiture** welcomes new members, girls or adults, into the Girl Scout family for the first time. Girls receive their Girl Scout, Girl Scout Brownie, or Girl Scout Daisy pin at this time.

**Opening ceremonies** start the Girl Scout meeting.

**Pinning Ceremonies** help celebrate when girls receive grade-level Girl Scout pins.

**Rededication Ceremonies** are an opportunity for girls and adults to renew their commitment to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
Bridging Ceremonies

**Theme/Purpose:** Moving to the next program level means MOVING – use a real or symbolic bridge.

**Mood & Atmosphere:** Celebrate the age of the girl, from light-hearted to serious. The younger the girl, the simpler and shorter the ceremony should be.

**Setting:** Be Prepared! If you are hosting outdoors, plan for sun & wind, and what to do if you need to go indoors. If you are indoors, could you move outside if the weather permits? Share your plans.

**Invitations & programs:** Memories of the day are important. Do the girls want to make it or the adults?

**Photographer:** Designate a photographer that will get “THE” shot, if not many.

**Opening:**
Who will MC? Will you have Special Speakers? Do you need a microphone? Do you need a Flag and/or Flag stand?
Briefly explain the significance of the ceremony (This can be an adult or girl).
Include a Promise, Pledge or song to either call the audience to their seats or in moving towards the correct mood.
Introduce Key points of the ceremony ONLY if guests are not aware via previous experience or there is no printed program.

**Main Part:**
Short version: Adult/Older girl removes vest/sash, participant walks across to another adult/older girl, who then puts new vest/sash on. Then, gives Girl Scout Handshake and participant stands aside until all are finished. MC then introduces new (brownie, etc) troop. Ceremony participants should all be Girl Scouts and wearing correct insignia.

Long Version: Girls can introduce elements such as flowers, candles, ribbons, or art and elaborate on how it relates to their Girl Scout experience. Each girl might speak on what the flower means to her or relates to a part of the GS Law. Photos could be presented and they talk of what they did during the year. Then girls express what they look forward to in the next phase of scouting. The actual bridging can be weaved within what the girls want to create for their ceremony.

Practice, practice, practice! The key to success is for everyone to be familiar with their role. Telling them you are taking off the vest is not the same as doing it – do you turn right or left? Do you remove right arm first or left? What will you do with the vests when you take them off? If you have a large troop you may need 2 people to hold vests on each side! Do the actual ceremony as much as possible, start to finish. Film it & upload it so they can practice.

**Closing:** Hold back those tears, it’s almost over. This is the time for announcing new officers, new leadership, and saying thank you to parent/committee helpers. End with a song such as make new friends or a reflective ceremony where girls take apart their elements (blow out candles) and leave the area. Or, a rousing congratulations and “please join us for cake”.

**Clean-up:** Have a plan that does NOT involve you. You’ve done enough! Delegate, and enjoy the day.
GIRL SCOUTS’ OWN

A Girl Scouts’ Own is an inspirational gathering planned and conducted by girls with the help of their leader that gives girls an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about the ideals of Girl Scouting. It is not a religious ceremony and should not be used to take the place of one. We don’t applaud at a Girl Scouts’ Own, we enter, attend and leave in silence because a Girl Scouts’ Own is a quiet, reflective time.

Talk with your girls about the purpose and meaning of a Girl Scouts’ Own and decide on a focus. Explain the quiet, reflective mood. Would they like to bring candles, flowers, songs or visitors? It might include poetry, music, photographs or words of thanks to scouting volunteers.

A Girl Scouts’ Own can take place anywhere and the outdoors provides an ideal setting for girls when held on an outing or a camping trip. In the woods, around a campfire or in a meadow - all are good choices. Once the location has been chosen, decide the details of agenda, supplies and have a complete practice. PRACTICE - a successful Girl Scouts’ Own will have a positive effect on girl’s feelings and regard for one another and the group. How will we move from point A to Point B? Who is lighting the first candle and where will the matches be? How much time will each person get?

Evaluate your ceremony at your following meeting. Expect to see emotional growth in individuals and a deepening group spirit as girls have good experiences planning and carrying out a Girl Scouts’ Own.

Sample Ideas:

Write each part of the Girl Scout Law on index cards. Each girl takes a card and spends 5-10 minutes to think of how that part of the law has been carried out in Troop activities and in her life. The leader says each part of the law and the girl lights a candle, then speaks to what that means to her. After all have spoken, the girls join and sing Make New Friends. The leader then puts out the candles, repeating all the laws, and when the last candle is out, everyone slowly leaves in quiet reflection.

Take a nature walk with the goal of appreciating the outside world. At the end, all gather in a circle on the ground and share what they heard & saw. Choose to be an animal or plant and express gratefulness for Girl Scouts that “leave no trace” and care for the environment. Walk back to the start reflecting on what each other has seen and appreciates in nature.
ASHES CEREMONY

Ashes taken from a campfire are sprinkled into the flames of the next campfire. The next morning, when the ashes are cold, they are stirred and each Scout takes some along to mix with her next campfire.

"We carry our friendship with us in these ashes from campfires with other comrades in other lands. May the joining of the dead fires with the leaping flames symbolize once more the unbroken chain that binds Scouts and Guides around the world. With greetings from Scouts of the United States, Guiders from Canada, England, and New Zealand, and everywhere."

If more than one Scout brings ashes to the same campfire, the lists are pooled, with the dates and places of all campfires recorded and passed on. It is traditional that only those present at the ceremony carry away ashes from that ceremony.

"Each of you present here will receive a portion of these campfire ashes to keep the chain of sisterhood continuing forever. We hope you will carry these ashes further on the journey around the world, and share them again and again."

The fire ring at Camp Arnaz contains ashes shared with our founder “Daisy” Juliette Low.