

## What You'll Need:

Leaders and Advisors

Moderator

Pen and paper for each group

Time: 15 - 30 minutes

Questions? Comments?  
Contact the Girl Scout  
Service Center nearest  
you.  
1-800-922-2770  
203-239-2922

[www.gsofct.org](http://www.gsofct.org)

## SWAPS

Otherwise known as  
Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere or  
Share With a Pal

### The history of SWAPS

The idea of exchanging mementos as a token of friendship is probably as old as mankind. At the first National Girl Scout Round-Up in 1956 the term "SWAP" was introduced on a national level by GSUSA in what was called the "SWAP Tent." This was a popular gathering place where Girl Scouts made new friends and exchanged personal tokens. At that time a SWAP was a little remembrance that one Girl Scout gave to another. It was handmade and represented the girl, her country, her community, or her background. SWAPPING was a way of starting correspondence with Girl Scouts from other states and countries. For this reason, girls were encouraged to attach their name, troop number, and address to the SWAP for future reference. The first SWAP Tent was such a success that SWAPS became a part of the National Girl Scout Round-Up Conferences and Wider Opportunities (now called Girl Scout *destinations*). Today Girl Scouts of all ages enjoy sharing SWAPS at national, regional, and local Girl Scout events as well as WAGGGS events.



The origin of SWAPS can be traced to Potlatch, the ceremonial distribution of gifts practiced by Native Americans of the Northwest. The first potlatch was used to explain how birds received their colored feathers. According to the legend, two Native American girls took feathers from a strange, magical bird and distributed them to all the birds in the forest - yellow and brown to the meadowlark, red and brown to the robin, brown to the wren, yellow and black to the finch. Native Americans had potlatch ceremonies to commemorate special occasions such as birth, marriage, and the coming of age. These ceremonies usually included speeches, songs, dances, games, races, and refreshments. The potlatch gifts, symbols of the family and their status in the village, were often elaborate and presented at the very end of the ceremony.

SWAPS are still the perfect way for Girl Scouts to meet each other and promote friendship. Each one is a memory of a special event or Girl Scout Sister.

### SWAPS Basics

SWAPS should tell something about the givers or their group. Girls may include their address or email information, with parental approval, so others can write to them. They should also represent the givers' country, community, or local Girl Scout Council. When choosing what to make, several things should be considered:

- that there is time to create the amount needed so there is one per participant;
- that the cost of materials is affordable;
- that the project is age-appropriate;
- that the SWAPS are sturdy enough to travel to and from the event.
- If the SWAPS will include a girl's contact information, her parents/guardians have granted permission.

## Tips for SWAPS Givers

Girls should:

- Think about the kind of SWAPS they would like to receive from someone else.
- Try not to spend a lot of money. Consider making something from donated or recycled material.
- Be creative, and take time to make hand-crafted SWAPS. (Include directions for making the SWAPS to simplify replication.)
- Try to have SWAPS for each event participant and staff member.
- Plan ahead so there's time to make the SWAPS.
- Make SWAPS that can be worn, used, or displayed.
- Ask their Troop/Group or Service Unit for help in putting SWAPS together, if needed.
- Make SWAPS portable. Remember: SWAPS must be carried or shipped ahead to the event, where other girls will be carrying them away.

## What to Do With SWAPS

Girls can:

- Include SWAPS with thank-you letters to sponsors and those who helped them go to a travel or Girl Scout *destinations* event.
- Make a display or scrapbook for travel night or Troop/Group visits.
- Keep SWAPS in a memory box or shadow box.
- Make a quilt, using SWAPS.
- Put pins and patches on a hat or jacket.
- Start a Council Best-of-SWAPS collection.

## SWAPS Safety and Etiquette

Girls should:

- Never refuse to swap with another person.
- Swap face-to-face, especially if exchanging addresses or email information. Parental permission should be attained before including personal information.
- Avoid using glass and sharp objects in SWAPS.
- Follow all *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Avoid using food products, unless they are individually wrapped. Be aware of potential food allergies.

**Additional Resource:**

[www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/swaps](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/swaps)

## What You'll Need:

Sheets of paper for collecting ideas

Pens or pencils

## SWAPSTORM

Divide the group into smaller groups, with 4 – 6 people in each group. Each group will need a sheet of paper and a pen.

1. Ask the groups to list as many SWAPS as they can think of. Compare lists. The group gets a point for each idea they have on their list. If that idea is not suggested by another group, they get a point for that otherwise unlisted item.
2. Ask the groups to list as many places or programs as they can where SWAPS might be exchanged.
3. Have each group create a one - two word phrase about materials that SWAPS could be made from and write this on the top of a sheet of paper. Fold the paper over just enough to cover the phrase. (Beginning of an accordion fold)
4. Pass the folded sheet to the group on their right.
5. Now the next group writes a type of SWAP that can be made WITHOUT looking at the materials suggested. Fold the sheet of paper over to cover up the type of SWAP named. ( accordion fold continues)
6. Pass the folded sheet to the group on their right.
7. The next group now writes a number and folds the sheet of paper over to cover up the number written. ( accordion fold continues)
8. Pass the folded sheet to the group on their right.
9. The next group writes where the SWAPS could be exchanged. Fold the sheet of paper over to cover up where SWAPS could be exchanged. ( accordion fold continues)
10. Pass the folded sheet to the group on their right. ( accordion fold completed)
11. This group opens the accordion folds and reads the SWAP idea to the group. This should result in giggles and maybe lots of laughter!
12. Have the group discuss a possible Service Unit event that could include SWAPping!

## What You'll Need:

Optional: Create cards with the answers and questions.

## SWAPS JEOPARDY

You can read each answer and ask for the questions or you can create cards with answers that can be laid out on the table in front of the group.

### \$100 category:

- Place where the term SWAPS was introduced: What was the SWAP Tent?
- 1956: What was the year of the first National Girl Scout Round-up where SWAPS were introduced?
- A way to start correspondence with Girl Scouts from other states and countries: What is a SWAP?

### \$500 category:

- In an effort to remind participants of each other, handmade items were given from one Girl Scout to another when participating in the same event: Why were SWAPS exchanged?
- Can be traced to the northwest Native American's Potlatch ceremony: Where did SWAPS originate?
- Parental approval should be sought first: What is including contact information on/in a SWAP?

### \$1000 category:

- Make SWAPS that can be worn, try to have SWAPS for each event participant and try not to spend a lot of money. What are Tips for SWAPS Givers?
- Never refuse to SWAP with another person, avoid using food products and avoid using sharp objects: What is included in SWAPS Safety and Etiquette?
- Make a display or scrapbook with SWAPS, make a quilt using SWAPS and/or cover a hat with SWAPS: What to do with SWAPS?

