

Dare to Share!

Taking Great Pictures That Tell a Great Story

Tips for the 2007-'08 National Cookie Activity

If you plan to participate in the National Girl Scout 2007-'08 Cookie Activity, you'll want to take photos that tell a great story, and you'll want to write great photo captions, too.

So, first things first: Get familiar with some great photography. Check out ads and articles in a variety of magazines, and in your daily newspaper or favorite Web site. What kinds of pictures catch your eye?

Next, look at the captions accompanying the photos. Notice how a lot of information can be packed into a small space—if you choose your words carefully.

Also, discuss with your Girl Scout group what activities you want to represent DISCOVER, CONNECT and TAKE ACTION (to make the world a better place) during the Girl Scout Cookie Activity. And decide who will be the photographer. You may want more than one photographer—girl or adult—because different people capture photographs in very different ways. Just remember: Most photographers will take more than one picture of whatever they are photographing so they can be sure they capture that special image they really need or want.

Tips for taking great pictures

- Photographs, especially action shots, can tell a great story—often a far better than words alone. A posed picture of Girl Scouts in front of the cookie booth is OK, but it doesn't say anything special about the girls or what they're doing. So avoid standard (dull!) group photos. Get in close and photograph faces and actions. Close-ups are much more intimate and draw the viewer into the photo.
- Don't try to get everyone in one picture. When you have a lot of people in the group, you lose the focus of the activity, unless the focus is to impress us with the sheer numbers.
- Unposed or candid situations make appealing photographs and convey the personalities of the subject.
- Reveal your subject's individuality; capture the emotion in her face. Show excitement as she learns something new or accomplishes a difficult task.
- Photograph activities and capture action. Consider using a slower shutter speed on some activity shots. The resulting blurriness might be just what's needed to communicate fun and action.
- Support the story you are telling. Make sure the photograph illustrates where you are or what activity you are participating in. Show yourself and your friends having fun.
- If working with film, develop it inexpensively. Then select the most interesting pictures and order new prints. If working with an electronic camera, download

- them to a computer and use a process of elimination and group selection to get your best pictures.
- Edit your photos. You can crop for detail and emphasis, or change a vertical orientation to a horizontal one.
 - Practice with your camera before you go on location. Find out how it works with or without a flash, and how close you should be to a subject when using a flash. This is particularly important if you are working with a digital camera for the first time.
 - Under-edit, rather than over-edit when submitting pictures that you prepare for online publication.
 - Don't forget that any picture you take for use on the Web or in publications must have consent forms from all of the people in the photo. If any of the people are minors, their parent or guardian needs to sign a photo-release form. The form can be duplicated from the GSUSA Web site. If you're taking pictures at a Girl Scout event, like a cookie rally, your council should have photo release statements on the permission form for the event.

Writing Photo Captions for Your Submissions

Writing those simple sentences under a picture is sometimes harder than writing a story. People look at the picture first, but they then look at the caption to tell them the “**who, what, where, why and how**” of the picture. So,

- **Be accurate.** Describe what really is happening, spell names and words correctly. If you are writing a story, make sure the caption and story words match.
- **Don't repeat** what you have elsewhere in the story or poster.
- **Use quotes from people** in the picture when possible.
- **Walk in the reader's shoes.** Ask yourself, “What would I want to know about that picture?”
- **Include how or why the action shown in the picture relates to DISCOVER, CONNECT, or TAKE ACTION** -- that is our focus of your submission.
- Include only the troop or group number, and the city/state, not names of individual girls.

Here's a sample photo caption:

Girls from Troop 71, San Francisco, Calif., share their group's cookie activity goals with a potential customer, explaining that they are earning money to provide books to children in a homeless shelter and to fund a trip to Our Cabaña, the Girl Scout/Girl Guide World Center in Mexico. In short, girls are “Connecting” with the public as they share their goals for the cookie activity.

An important note about picture quality for submissions:

Pictures need to be print quality at 8 ½ by 11 inches. (You may submit a smaller picture—4 by 6 inches—as long as it can be enlarged without losing quality.) They should be saved as .TIFs or .PDFs for maximum print quality, with a minimum of 300 dpi (dots per inch) or ppi (pixels per inch). We want pictures with high resolution that are not blurred when enlarged for printing. If you are working from an actual photo on paper, scan the photo at 300 dpi and save as a .tif, .eps or .pdf file for submission.