

What Is A SWAPS?

SWAPS, the tradition of Girl Scouts exchanging keepsakes, started long ago when Girl Scouts and Girl Guides first gathered for fun, song, and making new friends.

SWAPS were widely exchanged at national Girl Scout Senior Roundups in the 1950's and 1960's.

In more recent years, some Girl Scouts describe the types of objects now preferred as SWAPS by calling them:

Special **W**hatchamacallits **A**ffectionately **P**inned **S**omewhere.

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 e-mail information so others can write to them.)
- Represent the givers' country, community, or local Girl Scout council.

Tips for SWAPS Givers

Girls should:

- Think about the kind of swap 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 swap if it is a craft project that can be replicated.)
- Try to have one swap 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 group or service unit for help, if needed, in putting SWAPS together.
- 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 *destinations* event.
- Make a display or scrapbook for travel night or troop visits.
- Keep SWAPS in a memory box or shadow box.
- Make a quilt, using SWAPS.
- Put pins and patches on a hat or jacket, back pack or bulletin board.
- Start a council best-of-SWAPS collection.

SWAPS Safety and Etiquette

Girls should:

- Never refuse to swap with another person.
- Never say anything negative about a swap you are receiving.
- Never refuse to give a swap to someone because they don't have a swap to give you back.
- Swap face-to-face, especially if exchanging addresses or e-mail information.
- Avoid using glass and sharp objects in SWAPS.
- Follow all *Safety Activity Checkpoints* guidelines.
- Avoid using food products. SWAPS are saved for years and you don't want to encourage bugs.

Step one: Come up with a theme.

The theme should have something to do with the event.

Step two: Do some research.

If you are going to make fish-related SWAPS, try to be unique. Chances are, other troops will have plain, boring fish, but you can do much better. When you are researching, you may come across some information about overfishing. You may decide to make fishhooks out of wire or pipe cleaners with a label that says "Save our Fish!"

Decide what you will make.

It is best to have a couple different kinds of SWAPS per troop, just in case another troop has similar SWAPS or another troop gets tired of the same SWAPS over and over. In addition to the fishhook idea, for example, your troop may also want to make jellyfish out of coffee filters or starfish out of construction paper.

Find cheap materials.

Since you will be making 20+ SWAPS per girl, you don't want to spend tons of money on materials. SWAPS are supposed to be little handmade trinkets, not professional-quality souvenirs. It's okay if your SWAPS are made of less-than-perfect materials or look like they were made by children, which they were.

- All SWAPS are supposed to have a safety pin attached to them so they can be pinned to clothes, bags, hats, uniforms, etc.
- Make sure that when your Girl Scout troop goes somewhere they have SWAPS at the ready!
- Make sure that the safety pin is secure and will not fall off.
- If you are attaching pieces to other pieces, use the most secure material possible. Instead of a glue stick, use super glue, or better still, double-stick tape or hot glue.
- If you are Swap Crazy, you can just look around the house for loose stuff and pin!
- The girl scouts can carry their SWAPS in a plastic Ziplock bag with their name on it. Then they can put the ones they receive in that bag or a different bag. They can also pin their SWAPS on a hat or lanyard and just take them off to "swap" with a new one.
- SWAP (without the final "S") means "Share With A Pal". Have fun, make friends, and share!

There are many websites where you can find ideas or pictures of someone's display. There are also websites where you can order a kit that has all the parts there for you to put together. If you look at these ideas you can probably find a way to put them together without purchasing the kit.

I would suggest that you start with very simple ideas. Then as the fun of trading and as other people's ideas are looked at the girls may decide to make more and more detailed SWAPS.

You can just make one swap for your troop to trade with another troop but if you have 10 girls and the other troop has 10 girls that all made a different swap each girl in the other troop will end up with 10 of the SWAPS that your troop made. If you have each girl make a different idea then the girls can swap with each other as well as with other troops.

Ideas can be simple.

Camping ideas can include: Sleeping bag made by tying a roll of felt with some twine. A flashlight can be made by gluing a pom pom on a golf tee. This one will require you to hot glue a flat back pin on the golf tee. A tent can be made by cutting a tent out of felt and using a sharpie or fabric paint to detail the tent. A compass or a shovel can be made out of foam paper and use a sharpie to draw the details.

Daisy ideas can be beads tied to together to look like a daisy. You can purchase buttons that look like flowers or bugs and just put a pin on it.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

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