

SCOUT'S OWN CEREMONIES

What Is A Scout's Own?

A Scout's Own is a special type of ceremony that expresses the spirit of Girl Scouting. It is called a Scout's Own because girls and their leader plan it themselves. It's an opportunity for girls to express their thoughts and feelings. Planned and carried out by the girls with the help of their leaders, the Scout's Own is a ceremony, but it is not a "performance". If parents and public are part of the group, the program goes on just the same. The "audience" is expected to participate. It is NOT a religious ceremony and does not take the place of going to church, synagogue or temple. It may be held on any day of the week, in troop meetings or at camp.

Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, describes the Scouts Own as "A voluntary uplifting of their hearts . . . in thanksgiving for the joys of life, and a desire to seek inspiration and strength for greater love and service for others."

A Scout's Own can be held at any time, indoors or outdoors. You may use it to open or close a meeting or special occasion. Girls usually like to pick a special spot to hold a Scout's Own - one that they really like or that is especially scenic. It is a Girl Scout custom to walk quietly to the place where the ceremony is held and leave quietly after it is over. A good way to do this is to designate a "silent arch" that girls enter and become quiet as they approach the ceremony. This might be a tree branch, special rock, doorway, path, etc. As girls leave, they remain quiet until they pass back through the arch.

What's in a Scout's Own?

A Scout's Own is usually planned around a theme. The theme can be anything the girls want, but usually it is about important or inspirational ideas, such as the meaning of the Promise, friendship, the beauty of nature. Your troop might have a Scout's Own on a national holiday or one of Girl Scouting's special days. A smaller group usually plans a Scout's Own with the help of it's leader. If you have a large troop, a patrol or small group of girls can be responsible for planning a Scout's Own.

These are some ways to express your theme:

- Songs for everyone to sing
- Shadow play scene
- Music played by one or two girls
- Poems or Quotations
- Words a troop member writes for the Scout's Own
- Choral reading
- Stories and legends
- Girl Scout Promise
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Thoughts about what the theme means to her (spoken by each Girl Scout)

What Makes A Good Scouts Own?

First, it should have a central idea to give it unity. Sometimes Girl Scouts choose some aspect of the Promise or one or all of the Laws as a theme. A special occasion, such as the Fourth of July, Thinking Day, or Mother's Day may provide the basic idea. In camp, the sun, the moon, or the countless aspects of nature lie around in dazzling profusion, waiting to be "starred" in their own Scout's Own. In the city, too, the wonders of nature are there to be observed, to be searched out and recognized by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. A well-loved poem or legend may motivate the entire Scouts Own.

Good leadership can do much in guiding the girls toward suitable material. Giving several suggestions from which a choice can be made, helping to compare different selections for programs, and helping to distinguish between what is of value and what is unworthy of inclusion in this type of program are examples of how leaders can be involved in helping the girls plan a Scouts Own. At any event, there is always lively discussion as

stories, legends, lives of the famous in history, and fable are included or rejected according to the requirements of the theme, the length of the program and the time available for preparation.

Next the theme must take form. This does not imply elaborate preparation. It simply means careful planning by the girls themselves, with the aid of their leaders. They may decide to use one way, or a variety of ways to present the theme; dramatization, solo or choral singing, solo or choral reading, musical interludes, and background music. Participation by all is desirable, but not mandatory, although the major responsibility may be taken by a nucleus of girls, with everyone joining in the singing or responsive readings. Girls can be encouraged to share their personal thoughts by passing around a special item that each person holds while she speaks; a decorated stick, a special stone.

An attitude of quietness will make it a more meaningful experience for all involved. But, it is the spirit of an "uplifting of hearts" that really makes this ceremony a Scouts Own. And when, the program over, Girl Scouts quietly disperse, it would be with a feeling of inspiration, of having glimpsed "the vision splendid" the poet Wadsworth knew the young could see.

How to Plan:

- Choose a theme, such as one of the Laws, the Promise, our country, people, citizenship, nature (forests, rivers, mountains), special occasions (Thanksgiving, First Day of Spring), local history
- Make a list of the different ways you can tell or show the theme
- Choose one idea to open the Scout's Own
- Organize order of program
- Decide who is to lead parts
- Decide who is to lead the girls to and from the Scout's Own
- Decide how to end the Scout's Own

Where to have it:

- At a meeting (opening, closing, spontaneously when all girls reflect on a shared experience)
- At Camp (sunrise, campfire, sunset)
- Quiet place on a trail
- Anytime or anyplace, inside or outside, where Girl Scouts are gathered is the right place

Suggested time that a Scout's Own should last:

- Daisy and Brownie Girl Scouts 10 minutes
- Junior Girl Scouts 10-15 minutes
- Cadette Girl Scouts 15-20 minutes
- Senior Girl Scouts 20-30 minutes