

SWAPS

❖ Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere

❖ Share with a Pal



What are SWAPS?

SWAPS are a little something that you make that can be traded or swapped with others. SWAPS have a safety pin, clothes pin or string to allow the SWAP's to attach to something. It can also be a bracelet, necklace, patch or keychain.

SWAP history

The origin of SWAPS is Native American. Potlatch is the ceremonial exchange of gifts practiced by Native Americans of Northwest Coastal tribes. The custom stems from the legend explaining why birds have colored feathers. As the story goes, two Indian girls plucked feathers of a magic bird and distributed the multi-colored plumage to the colorless birds living in the forest. From that time on, birds have had brightly colored feathers and those gifts were remembered at potlatch ceremonies.

The Indians celebrating this ceremony made beautiful gifts to exchange with other families. To invite another family to their ceremony the host tribe would send a bundle of twigs containing the exact number of family members to be invited. After lots of singing, storytelling and eating it was time for gift giving. The gifts were always beautifully made with lots of color, beads, feathers and ribbons. After the gift giving they would sit around the campfire and tell yet another story.

The idea of SWAPS in Girl Scouting was started at the original National Roundup Conferences.

At that time a SWAP was a little remembrance that one Scout gave another. SWAPS are handmade, thus the girl is giving a part of herself to show friendship. SWAPS are exchanged at National Conventions, Council events, Wider Ops, Service Unit, neighborhood events, troop meetings and frequently at day camp. They should have a tag attached with the event name and date or the Troop number, Council name or State. In some countries SWAPS are called hat crafts.

SWAPping promotes friendship and encourages girls to talk to other people.

SWAPS are great mementos of a good time as well as a great way to share something about where they live and what they do.

The idea of collecting as many SWAPS as you can without getting to know the person makes the item traded (or swapped) a "collectible". Most of the SWAPping done today seems to have this idea rather than the traditional "SWAP" made to build up a friendship.

Why SWAP

- To make new friends
- To share differences and promote understanding of those differences
- To share our handiwork with other Girl Scouts
- To bring back a memento of a special occasion
- To encourage girls to talk to different people
- To share something about where you live and what your interests might be.

SWAPS basics

SWAPping "do's and don'ts" vary from council to council but there are some basic rules that everyone should be aware of.

SWAPS (SWAPpers) should;

- Tell something about the givers or their group.
- Represent the givers' country, community, or local Girl Scout council.
- They can also represent the theme of an activity or event.
- Be something that you would like to receive from someone else.
- Not be very expensive. Consider making something from donated or recycled material.
- Be creative, you should take time to make hand-crafted SWAPS.
- Be something that can be worn, used, or displayed.
- Be small, they are usually only an inch or two in size and attach with a safety pin.
- ALWAYS say thank you!
- Include the information such as your troop number, city and state on the SWAP. You may also want to mark it with the date or the event name to help identify the SWAP later on. Tags can be easily made on the computer, cut to size and attached to the pin. Tags should also be made from cardstock and not paper so that they last longer. `1
- Most SWAPS have a pin on them so they can be pinned to a hat or a shirt but they don't have to. SWAPS can be bracelets, necklaces, council patches, event patches, district/division/camp crests, or other small items.
- Carry the SWAPS you want to trade separately from the ones you want to keep.
- Girls are encouraged to trade with a variety of troops.

SWAPping Don'ts:

- SWAPS without a meaning – SWAPS should have something to do with the event, with Girl Scouting in general, the troop or about the person who made it.
- Food items - they can't be kept as keepsakes and they attract bugs and critters when outdoors.
- Flimsy SWAPS - they're heartbreaking for the creator and the recipient. Make sure items are colorfast, the pin is secure and the item can hold up to handling and transport.
- Leader/Mom-made SWAPS - items shouldn't be made FOR the girls by their leaders or moms - after all, what would the point be? SWAPS should be designed with the age and skill level of the girls making the SWAP. Don't give them something they can't do on their own (or without minimal help).
- Forgetting the girls - Don't design SWAPS without giving the opportunity for the girls to also make one for themselves. Otherwise, they won't want to give it away!
- Avoid using glass and sharp objects in SWAPS.
- Some say to never refuse a SWAP, but I feel they can POLITELY refuse a SWAP if they already have that SWAP from other girls in their troop. Please discourage girls from collecting one particular kind of SWAP – it ends up hurting feelings. Encourage them to get the largest variety possible!
- Never give a SWAP away that someone gave you.

- Always have a few extra SWAPS on hand for those people who have few or none. It is also nice if you give someone a SWAP who doesn't have one to give in return. That is what being a Girl Scout is all about.

Exchanging SWAPS

On the day of an event, each girl will come with her SWAPS, and will mingle with other girls, trading her SWAPS. Leaders may want to come prepared with a few extra SWAPS for girls who were absent when they were made, or who may have left their SWAPS at home. SWAPS to be kept (keepers) are frequently pinned on to hats or bandannas. Sometimes they are pinned onto a specific area of a shirt. SWAPS for trade can be in a SWAP bag, zipper baggie, shoe box, a friendship tie or pinned onto ribbon, anything that can be easily carried.

How many?

Each girl should decide how many SWAPS she wants to trade. The amount of SWAPS they have is about the same amount they will receive. Just remember it is not about how many you can get, but how many people you become friends with. She may make them all the same, or make every one different. If you are attending an event as a troop, encourage each girl to make a different SWAPS. This will prevent an overabundance of one SWAPS.

What to Do With SWAPS

- SWAPS are traditionally pinned on a SWAP hat or SWAP vest. This hat could be part of your troop identification. Perhaps matching painter's caps or bucket hats in your troop color.

Other things to do with SWAPS

- 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 to show visiting troops.
- Keep SWAPS in a memory box or shadow box.
- Make a quilt, using SWAPS.
- Put pins and patches on a vest or jacket.
- Start a council, Service Unit or troop best-of-SWAPS collection.
- SWAPS can also be displayed on a banner, troop flag, or the kitchen curtain
- Never wear SWAPS on the front of your Girl Scout Uniform.
- Set up an on-line exchange and start a All 50 State SWAPS collection.
- earn a badge, or try-it and make a display for your SWAPS

When do you make SWAPS

SWAPS can be made during a troop meeting, during a special meeting called for the express purpose of making SWAPS, or examples shown at the meeting, with the SWAPS to be made at home. One suggestion, which might be helpful for younger girls, is to have a mother/daughter evening to mass produce the SWAPS in one night.

What to consider when making SWAPS with your troop

- Make sure that the SWAP that is chosen is age appropriate.
- Try one yourself first to see how difficult.
- Consider what tools you will need to complete (glue gun, sharp tools, drills) and make sure you have enough help so everyone is supervised.
- Pre-cut some parts for younger girls or to save time.

- Do what is needed to SWAP and a few more for those that don't have any. Don't make so many that the girls get bored!
- Be accepting of what your girls do. Allow them room for creativity.
- Make SWAPS sturdy enough to be around awhile.

Supplies You may Need

- Basic crafting supplies: scissors, craft glue, low temp. glue gun, glue sticks, ruler, pencils
- safety pins, permanent markers and cord or twine
- Extension cord
- Zip closing Baggies to hold the SWAPS
- Clothespins make good clamps
- Toenail clippers are great for cutting chenille stems, pipe cleaners or tie twists
- Dental floss is great for stringing, hanging or tying crafts
- Corn holders or pushpins can be used to punch holes
- Plastic tablecloths or newspapers for table covers

SWAPS-Resources

<http://www.scoutswaps.com/>

<http://snappySWAPS.com/>

<http://www.scoutmom.net/swaps/index.htm>

<http://gsleaders.org/files/SWAPS.htm>

http://parentingteens.about.com/od/girlscoutsandgirlguides/a/swaps_girlscout.htm

<http://www.acme.com/licensemaker/>

<http://poohswoods.homestead.com/flagpins.html>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20001031162627/craftbin.com/scouts/SWAPS.htm>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20001004213106/www.geocities.com/Heartland/Flats/4413/crafts.html>

<http://www.goddesscamp.org/campfire/SWAPS.htm>

<http://swaps-a-lot.ecrater.com/>

Yahoo/facebook groups to join. You can join in on SWAPS with other leaders and girls

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SWAPMakers/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Girl-Scout-Swaps/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SWAPSGirlScoutStyle/>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/GSSWAPS/>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/gswoit/>

and don't forget to google and pinterest.

