

What Are "S.W.A.P.S." And Why Are They Important?

"Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere"

"Shared With A Pal"

What are SWAPS? A SWAP is a handmade craft that Girl Scouts give or trade with other Girl Scouts as a special 'remember me' gift. S.W.A.P.S. can be simple or complex, cheap or expensive, whatever the maker desires. SWAPS are usually an inch to two inches in size. It is not necessary to spend a lot of money on S.W.A.P.S. Many people make them out of scraps or natural materials. Most S.W.A.P.S. are made with pins attached so they can be pinned onto a camp shirt or hat. S.W.A.P.S. are little things that girls and leaders make to trade with each other at county or national events. S.W.A.P.S. do not have to be pins. They can be bracelets, necklaces, council patches, event patches, or other small items.

S.W.A.P.S. should NOT contain edible food. Food items can't be kept as keepsakes and they attract bugs and critters when outdoors.

SWAPS History: "SWAPS" can trace their roots to *POTLATCH* the Native American custom of a ceremonial distribution of gifts (see Potlatch section below).

The idea of S.W.A.P.S. started at the original National Roundup Conferences. At that time a "S.W.A.P." was a little remembrance that one Girl Scout gave to another.

What is a Potlatch? A ceremonial feast among certain Native American peoples of the Northwest Pacific coast . . . at which the host distributes gifts requiring reciprocation. From the Chinook (Nootka patshatl), meaning "to give".

Potlaches were social celebrations given by coastal tribes to celebrate important events such as the ascension of a new chief, rites of passage for girls and boys, birth, marriage and death. Members of the local tribes were invited for common potlatches, while elites invited guests from many tribes. Depending upon the tribe, the potlatch took on many forms, but most lasted for several days and included singing, dancing, games and eating. A host could easily find himself bankrupt from throwing a single potlatch, but because of the prestige for himself and his clan, it was considered well worth the price and all of the effort. During the potlatch, there were ceremonial exchanges of gifts between those in attendance. They included canoes, blankets, food, equipment and jewelry, as well as household items.

Why SWAP? The girls and leaders "S.W.A.P." these tokens with new friends they make at various events such as wider opportunities and national meetings. S.W.A.P.S. are made and given to promote friendship and to make new friends. Swapping allows us to share our handiwork with other scouts and to bring back a memento of a special occasion. SWAPS are usually exchanged at an intertroop cookout or campfire. SWAPS are also exchanged at Council, Association or Service Unit Events (such as Jamborees, Encampments, Day or Twilight Camps). Cadette and Seniors going to a Wider Opportunity may want to SWAP. Many troops that visit Birthplace of Juliette Gordon Low exchange SWAPS with troops they meet there.

Planning and making SWAPS: Swaps should be hand made. Store bought things take away from the concept of the gift. Each girl should decide how many S.W.A.P.S. she wants to trade. She may make them all the same, or make everyone different. S.W.A.P.S. can be made during part of a troop meeting, during a special meeting called for the purpose of making S.W.A.P.S., or with examples shown at the meeting, with the S.W.A.P.S. to be made by the girls at home. If you are making S.W.A.P.S. in your troop, give the girls an assortment of beads, small wooden shapes, paints, markers, ribbons, felt, chenille stems, and let their imaginations go wild. It is a good idea for the Leader to have several SWAPS samples on hand as an example for those girls who cannot think of a single thing to make. S.W.A.P.S. usually tell something about the person who made it or about the area or region that they are from. They can also represent the theme of an activity or event. S.W.A.P.S. are usually only an inch or two in size. Instruct the girls to create their S.W.A.P.S. with a safety pin attached, or some way of wearing the swap. If you are attending an event as a troop encourage each girl to make a different SWAPS. This will prevent an overabundance of your SWAPS.

S.W.A.P.S. Etiquette

Swapping "do's and don'ts " can vary from council to council, but there are basic rules that everyone should be aware of and follow so there are no hurt feelings.

- S.W.A.P.S. to be traded should be carried in a shoebox or bag, or pinned to your shirt.
- S.W.A.P.S. that are pinned to someone's hat are generally considered off-limits unless they are offered to you as a trade.
- It is considered rude if you refuse to swap with someone who asks you.
- Be courteous. If a person gives you a swap you don't really like, remember that it may have come with the purest of intentions and the simplest of skills. One good thing to do when you go to a camporee or other event where there is a lot of swapping is to wear a hat and put the swaps you want to KEEP there, while putting the ones you are willing to trade on a shirt or vest.
- If you don't like the item you have been given, or already have an identical S.W.A.P, accept it politely, and give them one of yours with a Girl Scout smile.
- Always remember to say thank you when someone gives you a swap. Not only is this good manners, but also it is encouraging for others to share. A Girl Scout is courteous.
- Swaps should be hand made. Store bought things take away from the concept of the gift. It is not how fancy your swap is, it's the smile that accompanies it when given!
- Always have a few extra S.W.A.P.S. on hand for those people who don't have any. It is also nice if you give someone a S.W.A.P. who doesn't have one to give in return. It is always a Girl Scout "good turn" to give to those who have few or none.
- Include the information such as your troop number, city and state on the S.W.A.P. You may also want to mark it with the date or the event name to help identify the S.W.A.P. later on.

When swapping by mail:

- Find out how many girls and leaders are in the troop you are swapping with.
- Don't forget to tell them how many are in YOUR group.
- Keep the SWAPS light and small. It keeps the postage down.
- Be sure to place the correct amount of postage on your SWAPS package.
- Share how you made the SWAPS so the other troop can try it and pass it on.
- Always remember Safety Wise when mailing. It is best to use your leaders address or a neutral person, rather than a girl's address.
- Acknowledge you received the SWAPS, either via e-mail, snail mail, or telephone. The other troop will be wondering if you received them and whether or not you liked them.
- When you agree to swap, keep your word. If you do not, you will be disappointing not just another leader, but a bunch of little girls.
- Have fun! That's the most important thing for you AND the girls.