

Snippets of Advice

- ✓ **Be helpful to each other** – share best practices about the role, things you are learning about the kids, have your helpers pack a bag for the next day to make all of your lives easier etc.
- ✓ **Be Creative** – Use your imagination. If you want to do something just do it... make a costume, put on a play, organise a game, don't just wait for organised activities and don't just sing.
- ✓ **Imagine** – this is your first time doing a role like this and how scary that would be – try to talk to your helpers in this context.
- ✓ **Big Picture** - Don't be afraid to tell people that you are unsure where a child & helper are – but never on the radio when the public can hear you!
- ✓ **Be A Group** – As much as is practical, try and keep your group together. It's easier for you as a GL, it's more relaxed for your helpers and it gives the kids more chance to interact.

Most of all, enjoy it! If you're happy and exude confidence and fun, then your helpers will be happy, and your kids will be happy.



GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Informal tips from voices of experience

The first thing that should be stressed is that you should not see this document as a 'how to' guide to 'do' the role of Group Leader. It should be seen as offering advice and tips from people who have done something similar before. But only take the advice if you want to; this booklet should in no way prevent you from bringing your own creativity to the role, doing things differently and doing things better. It's a cliché, but there really is no "right" way.

Pre-Holiday Tips

- **Timetable** - Familiarise yourselves with the timetable for the week. If you know, then your helpers will be better informed, and so will the kids. This keeps everyone happy and increases the chances of everyone being in the right place at the right time (fingers crossed!).
- **First Meeting** - Perhaps think through how you will start this/what you'll say. Your group will have just had a scary 2-hour talk, so introduce SuperTroop with all its positives and what you love about it, but stress what you will expect from your group and the challenges they are likely to face. It's a great time to lay down the "rules", e.g. no swapping kids without asking, no facebooking, etc. Try to convey how you would like the week to go and try to relax everyone, even if you might be nervous yourself.

The Week

The role of a Group Leader is really divided into two parts: Practical and Pastoral. The Practical elements will help you to be where you need to be and with all the things you need. The Pastoral encompasses the support you provide to your helpers, and each other.

Practical

Basic daily routine

- **Mornings** – Now you don't have a kid to wash / dress of a morning, you have extra time in bed! However, it's also a good idea to make sure that all of your group are progressing with their morning routine and helping them where needed. It's also a great time to have another look over the kids' sheets for your group that day.
- **Breakfast (/all meals)** – The most important thing is that the kids get the right food, so check their dietary requirements. The next most important thing is that they get the right amount of food (not too much or too little), so keep an eye on quantities and inform the SH team if you have concerns. Also ensure that your helpers are well fed - it's your job to ply them with food. Try and encourage your helpers / kids to stay at the table to minimise chaos, whilst you perform the role of waiter / waitress (reinforce the fact that no helper ever leaves his / her child alone at the table, even if there's lots of other helpers around). You should also remember that it is the responsibility of you and your group to clear the table at the end of the meal.
- **Medication** – If any of the kids in your group have medication that needs to stay with them (check sheets), it remains in mission control for as long as we are at the house. If your group is swimming, or we are going on a trip, you will need to collect their medication and sign it out. Keep it in your rucksack. If your group splits, the medication should go with the helper looking after the child to whom it belongs. When we return to the house, remember to sign it back in.
- **Swimming** – Try and factor in swimming when you assign helpers to kids for the day. It saves a lot of swapping just beforehand, because obviously boys need to be with boys and girls with girls. There will be plenty of SHs on hand in the changing rooms if any of your helpers need assistance.

What to bring

- ❖ **A rucksack** – Not as obvious as you might think – many people are prone to forgetting! This is what you will keep all your IMPORTANT GL stuff in, like medication, a spray bottle of water, spare rubber gloves, and your group's sheets. Also to be found in a GL rucksack: snacks and spare toys etc., anything you want really.
- ❖ **Ideas** - It's nice to have an arsenal of ideas to fall back on in situations where there might not be a specific activity planned. Think of things to entertain the group on long bus journeys or when you're hanging out outside. A game of Duck Duck Goose or an impromptu theatrical production usually goes down a treat, but you might have other plans to help your helpers / kids bond... This is by no means a necessity, but it's worth having a little think about...
- ❖ **Props** – Similar to "ideas", it's always nice to be able to delve into your rucksack and pull out something that's going to entertain someone on a long bus journey. Think colourful, pretty, sensual!
- ❖ **Snacks** - We'd like to try and get all GLs to bring the crisps / chocolate / fizzy pop for your duty night with you to the holiday. This means you don't have to disappear into town just before your duty starts. So please remember to pick up some stuff en route if possible. Remember also that we do not expect you to fund any of the week out of your own pocket – you should ask your group for contributions or for refreshments etc. while we're on a trip, you should keep the receipt and ask to be reimbursed.

Other Considerations

Senior Helpers

The SHs are there to help you, so use them! If you have more male / female helpers in your group, it's worth drafting in an SH of the opposite sex to help you during swimming and on trips away from the house – SHs are not usually required when we're at the house. Don't be afraid to ask any SH whether they would like to be with your group the following day (don't assume that e.g. the nurses can't be with you) and try to get organised as early as possible. Use your SH for whatever purpose you need them, whether that be allowing others to have breaks, being a 'model' helper to inspire your group or shadowing one of your helpers who is struggling.

Day off

Hooray! It's your long-awaited and well-earned day off! If this is at the beginning of the week, it's a great opportunity to get to know your helpers, and for them to get to know each other. If your day off falls later on in the week it'll be these things too, but also a much-needed rest.

There will be some duties to do in the morning, which will be listed in Mission Control. After your group has had breakfast, arrange a time to meet in MC. It's really important to the running of the week that all tasks are performed fully and correctly. Be efficient, work hard and get them done so you can start your day off.

The world's your oyster – you will receive some spending money so go out and explore the beautiful city of Edinburgh. As long as you're back in time for sing song, you can do what you like. The most important thing is to make sure that no-one gets in to a position where there is any doubt about their ability to look after a child. Be sure to remind your helpers that they will still need to put their kid to bed in the evening, but ultimately it is your responsibility to make sure everyone else is responsible.

- Trips – Usually require a spare set of clothes for all kids if water-based, spare socks if there's a ball pool, take plenty of pads for any incontinent kids, and don't forget the medication...! There's plenty to remember... why not use this handy mnemonic:

What Might Come In Handy?

W – Wheelchairs

M – Medication

C – Clothing

I – Incidentals

H – HELPERS.

For incidentals, think radio (for you and also for one of your helpers if you have any kids who require a radio to be with them), GL bag with gloves / nappy sacks / water etc.

- Lunch – (See Breakfast) Might be packed, in which case make sure the right dietary requirement stuff gets to the right kid. Those children who have special diets will have an individually labeled pack lunch. Make sure everyone washes his or her hands!
- Dinner – (See Breakfast). Make sure everyone washes his or her hands again.
- Diaries – On the SuperTroop week, your group of kids and their helpers will be managed by one of the senior team, while you have your daily GL meeting....
- Group Leader meetings – This is the time you get to talk about your groups, your helpers, the kids, and anything else that you think might be helpful to share. Information sharing between the GLs is key to the holiday so make good use of this time.
- Sing Song – Just keep counting to check you have everyone. And sing loudly.

- Bedtime – Some of your helpers may have challenging night-time kids. Help as much as possible to bath / shower them, and check that your group are all OK. Encourage a relaxed bedtime routine and ensure that no-one goes anywhere until the duty group is in place. If you *are* the duty group, position your helpers around the house as soon as possible and ply them with snacks.
- Off-duty evening – Self-explanatory. Normally nice to socialize a bit with your group, but you don't have to/they may not want you to. Make sure no-one's getting pissed and make sure everyone heads back to the house in a timely manner.
- Evening meetings – Here's when you go through the next day's group with your helpers. It's a good idea for everyone to read all of the kids' sheets and it's also a good idea to work out who will go with whom for the first part of the next day.
- Bed – By "bed", we mean "send your group to bed"; there may be a GL and SH meeting thereafter.

Pastoral

Day 1

As this is your first year as a Group Leader, you will probably spend the whole first day feeling very strange. This is normal. The most important thing to do on the first day is to make sure your helpers have the opportunity to bond with their night-time kid. It is up to you entirely, but it may be a good idea to keep each helper with their night-time child for a decent proportion of the day. Be mindful that some of your helpers may not have night-time children – it is really important to give them some one-on-one time to get them involved in the holiday.

Experienced Helpers

There will be some experienced helpers at SuperTroop, who will want to be relied upon, so don't feel bad about heaping responsibility onto them.

"New" Helpers

On the other hand, most of your helpers will be new and some may be struggling... There are a few things you can do to help them get into the swing of things. One of the best is the Senior Helper model. By placing a struggling helper with your group's SH for the day, they can watch how they interact with the kids and hopefully pick up some ideas. It's best not to tell the helper this is what you're doing though...

All Helpers

Encouragement is one of the most important things you can provide as a GL. Verbal praise and reassurance through the day and at evening meetings goes a long way. Even crappy verbal awards can make helpers feel that their hard work is being noticed and appreciated.

Respect

Finally, although it's vital to bond with your group, don't forget to stamp your authority. This will stop your helpers doing things like swapping kids without checking with you or undermining your instructions. This doesn't happen very often anyway, but by ruling your group with a fur-covered iron fist, you can ensure it doesn't happen at all.

Support network

Whilst the SHs are obviously there to support you at all times, your most important support network is each other. SHs are always there for you and will do their best, but sometimes the SHs are too old to remember the day-to-day of being a group leader. But you're all doing it together and will probably have just the right piece of advice... so make the most of it. You should have no trouble in picking the right person to chat to if you've got something on your mind.

Breaks

Establish the length of breaks people prefer. Don't be afraid to use SHs and don't worry about not giving enough - GLs always feel this way, but you shouldn't feel pressured into giving unnecessary breaks. Different people prefer breaks at different times (coach trip versus middle of an outing), so be cognoscente of that. Find a formula that suits you - there is no single rigid system for this. Also, beware not to take "more" breaks than your helpers and always ensure that your group is sorted (e.g. on arriving back at the houses) before going for a break yourself.