

# S.W.A.P.S.

Special Whatchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere

Share with a Pal



## **What are S.W.A.P.S.?**

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

## **S.W.A.P. history**

The origin of S.W.A.P.S. 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 S.W.A.P.S. in Girl Scouting was started at the original National Roundup Conferences.

At that time, a S.W.A.P. was a little remembrance that one Scout gave another. S.W.A.P.S. are handmade, thus the girl is giving a part of herself to show friendship. S.W.A.P.S. 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 S.W.A.P.S. are called hat crafts.

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

S.W.A.P.S. 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 S.W.A.P.S. 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 "S.W.A.P." made to build up a friendship.

## **Why S.W.A.P.**

- 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.

## **S.W.A.P.S. basics**

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

### **S.W.A.P.S (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 S.W.A.P.S.
- 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 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. 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 S.W.A.P.S. have a pin on them so they can be pinned to a hat or a shirt but they don't have to. S.W.A.P.S. can be bracelets, necklaces, council patches, event patches, district/division/camp crests, or other small items.
- Carry the S.W.A.P.S. you want to trade separately from the ones you want to keep.
- Girls are encouraged to trade with a variety of troops.

### **S.W.A.P. ping Don'ts:**

- S.W.A.P.S. without a meaning – S.W.A.P.S. 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 S.W.A.P.S. - 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 S.W.A.P.S. - items shouldn't be made FOR the girls by their leaders or moms - after all, what would the point be? S.W.A.P.S should be designed with the age and skill level of the girls making the S.W.A.P. Don't give them something they can't do on their own (or without minimal help).
- Forgetting the girls - Don't design S.W.A.P.S 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 S.W.A.P.S.
- Some say to never refuse a S.W.A.P., but I feel they can POLITELY refuse a S.W.A.P. if they already have that S.W.A.P. from other girls in their troop. Please discourage girls from collecting one particular kind of S.W.A.P. – it ends up hurting feelings. Encourage them to get the largest variety possible!
- Never give a S.W.A.P. away that someone gave you.

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

### **Exchanging S.W.A.P.S.**

On the day of an event, each girl will come with her S.W.A.P.S, and will mingle with other girls, trading her S.W.A.P.S. Leaders may want to come prepared with a few extra S.W.A.P.S for girls who were absent when they were made, or who may have left their S.W.A.P.S. at home. S.W.A.P.S. to be kept (keepers) are frequently pinned on to hats or bandannas. Sometimes they are pinned onto a specific area of a shirt. S.W.A.P.S. for trade can be in a S.W.A.P. 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 S.W.A.P.S. she wants to trade. The amount of S.W.A.P.S. 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 S.W.A.P.S. This will prevent an overabundance of one S.W.A.P.

### **What to Do With S.W.A.P.S**

- S.W.A.P.S are traditionally pinned on a S.W.A.P. hat or S.W.A.P. 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 S.W.A.P.S.

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

### **When do you make S.W.A.P.S.**

S.W.A.P.S. can be made during a troop meeting, during a special meeting called for the express purpose of making S.W.A.P.S. or examples shown at the meeting, with the S.W.A.P.S 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 S.W.A.P.S. in one night.

### **What to consider when making S.W.A.P.S. with your troop**

- Make sure that the S.W.A.P. 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 S.W.A.P. 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 S.W.A.P.S. sturdy enough to be around awhile.

### **Supplies You May Need**

- Basic crafting supplies: scissors, craft glue, low temperature glue gun, glue sticks, ruler, pencils
- safety pins, permanent markers and cord or twine
- Extension cord
- Zip closing Baggies to hold the S.W.A.P.S.
- 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

### **S.W.A.P.S-Resources**

- <http://www.scoutswaps.com/>
- <http://snappySWAPS.com/>
- <http://www.scoutmom.net/swaps/index.htm>
- [http://parentingteens.about.com/od/girlscoutsandgirlguides/a/swaps\\_girlscout.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/od/girlscoutsandgirlguides/a/swaps_girlscout.htm)
- <http://web.archive.org/web/20001031162627/craftbin.com/scouts/SWAPS.htm>
- Or join this Facebook Group:  
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/gswoit/>

