

S.W.A.P.S.
Something Worn Affectionately Pinned Somewhere
Special Whatchamacallit Affectionately Pinned
Share With A Pal

History

The origin of S.W.A.P.ing is Native American - potlatch is the ceremonial exchange of gifts practiced by Native Americans in Northwest Coastal tribes (from the Chinook “nootka patshatl”, meaning “to give”). This custom stems from the legend explaining why birds have colored feathers. As the story goes, two Native American girls plucked the feathers of a magic bird and distributed the multicolored 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 potlatch ceremony was held to commemorate such events as the ascension of a new chief, rites of passage for girls and boys, birth, marriage or death. A messenger carrying a bundle of sticks, representing the number of people invited, summoned families to the potlatch. Members of the local tribes were invited for common potlatches, while "elites" invited guests from many tribes.

Depending on 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. The host members of his family were costumed and enacted legends about the heritage. The gift giving came last of all, just before the guests departed. Since potlatch gifts were symbols of the families' status in the village, they were often quite elaborate, often being carved boxes, canoes, dishes jewelry, mats and blankets.

S.W.A.P.s in Girl Scout History

In 1924, the Boy Scout Imperial Jamboree was held at Wembley, England, which was open to all of the Boy Scouts in the English Commonwealth. There was one group of Boy Scouts who could not attend: these Scouts had been hospitalized for a long time. Guiding/Scouting was a very important part of many of these children's lives. They wore their uniforms even if bedridden and they had regular Guide/Scout activities. Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting/Guiding, was concerned that these children could not take part in the Jamboree, so he came up with an idea. Each of these children could make a "mafuzziwog". Just at the boys who attended the Jamboree were selected on their Scouting abilities, these children would be represented by the "mafuzziwog" they made.

A "mafuzziwog" was a S.W.A.P. that the Scouts could make out of items they found around the hospital. Using things such as tape, thread, bandage, and even chicken bones, each Scout made their own S.W.A.P. and the best of these were displayed at the Jamboree. Hopefully, they started some special friendships between the Scouts inside the hospital and the Scouts outside.

The idea of S.W.A.P.s in Girl Scouts was started at the National Roundup Conference. At the time, a S.W.A.P. was a little remembrance that one Girl Scout gave another. S.W.A.P.s are handmade, thus the girl was giving a part of herself to show friendship. S.W.A.P.s are now exchanged at National Conventions, council events, wider Ops, service unit events, troop meetings and at day camps, as a way to introduce one Scout to another. S.W.A.P.s are traded and a conversation results from explaining the S.W.A.P.s to others. Many of these S.W.A.P.s start long friendships that last, although the two "swappers" may live in different areas.

A S.W.A.P. is usually, but not always, a small homemade item that represents the person, their community or their background – it's a good way of starting a correspondence with Scouts from other cities, states and countries. For this reason, you usually attach your name or troop number and address for future reference.

Why S.W.A.P.?

With their little craft in hand, a girl has a reason to approach someone they might normally not speak to, so they can ask that all important question....
“Want to S.W.A.P.?”

S.W.A.P.s are made and given out:

- To make new friends
- To share differences and promote understanding of those differences
- To share our handiwork with other 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.

Through Swapping we gain knowledge and knowledge of other brings friendship with others. Friendship with others brings understanding of others. Understanding of others can bring us all world peace. (Lofi)

Where to begin

S.W.A.P.s can be simple or complex, cheap or expensive, whatever the maker desires. 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 that they can be pinned onto a camp shirt or hat.

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 and instructions sent home for S.W.A.P.s to be made by the girl later.

A favorite method of S.W.A.P. making is to simply bring together an assortment of different materials and see what the girls come up with. If you are making S.W.A.P.s at your troop meeting, give the girls an assortment of beads, small wooden shapes, paints, markers, ribbons, craft foam, pompoms, felt, chenille stems, etc., and let their imaginations go wild!

Making the S.W.A.P. and then giving it themselves is very important to the girls. It makes them feel good about themselves and proud of their accomplishment. Especially when they realize the S.W.A.P. they made has made another Scout happy!

Doing the prep work, like cutting out shapes is helpful to the girls, but resist the urge to make the whole S.W.A.P. with them. So what if it is not straight for does not look exactly like the sample? It's their creation and they can be proud of what they made.

How many should we make?

This is the most frequently asked question. Each girl should decide how many S.W.A.P.s she wants to trade – this is the same number that she will receive. If you make 10 S.W.A.P.s, then you will get back 10 of them. However if you run into a troop of 10 girls, you may find yourself done for the day! The usual recommendation is at least 20 S.W.A.P.s per girl.

It is also recommended that girls in one troop make S.W.A.P.s that are different from each other. This can help prevent them from running into someone who already has their S.W.A.P.

Other points to consider:

- Your S.W.A.P. should not contain edible ingredients, as they may spoil or attract critters in the outdoors. Foam craft sheets make a great substitution for those ideas that contain edible parts.
- It helps to give the girls this simple instruction: *Try to make your S.W.A.P.s some you would want to receive.* Sounds pretty basic, but you'd be amazed!
- The type of glue that you use is important to take into consideration. Many S.W.A.P.s simply cannot be made using regular glue and a Daisy Scout cannot use a hot glue gun. So be careful not to choose a S.W.A.P. idea that would require too much assistance from you – if you have made the S.W.A.P., it's not hers to give.

- A S.W.A.P. usually tells something about the person who made it or about the area or region that it came 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 S.W.A.P. (S.W.A.P.s can also be bracelets, necklaces, council patches, event patches, district/division/camp crests or other small items)
- S.W.A.P.s are traditionally pinned on a S.W.A.P.s hat. This hat could be part of your troop identification, perhaps matching painter's caps in your troop color. On the day of an event, each girl will come with a supply of her S.W.A.P.s and will mingle with the 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 theirs at Home. It is also nice if you give someone a S.W.A.P. who doesn't have one to give in return. After all, that is what being a Girl Scout is all about.

S.W.A.P.s Etiquette

- S.W.A.P.ing "dos 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 for trade are carried separately from the ones you want to keep.
- 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 on a ribbon – anything that can be easily carried. "Keepers" are frequently pinned on hats or bandanas. The "keeper" S.W.A.P.s are generally considered off-limits, unless they are offered to you as a trade.
- When trading, you should approach the person you wish to trade with, introduce yourself and ask if they would like to trade S.W.A.P.s
- It is considered rude if you refuse to S.W.A.P. with someone who asks you.
- 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! *Try to make your S.W.A.P.s something you would want to receive.*

- Always say Thank You. A Girl Scout is courteous.
- Include 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.

Variations on the S.W.A.P. theme

Sculpey (polymer clay) beads: a theme bead made for monthly service unit leaser meetings as a way to generate excitement about attending

Incentive bead pins. Again, following a theme, but simpler in nature – given to Scouts at troop meetings as an incentive for remembering things such as uniform, dues, permission slips, etc. Or just a memento of special occasions. Kept on a troop hat – can be traded at any time with other girls. At the end of the year encampment they will have these additional pins to trade if they choose.

Sources

The following websites are active and have been previewed. However be sure that your filtering software settings are set at their highest screening level if you should search for other ideas with your Scouts on the Internet!

<http://www.makingfriends.com/swaps.htm>

A terrific source for S.W.A.P. ideas, as well as the ability to order craft kits/supplies directly from the website

<http://dragonswaps.com/index1.htm>

Personal S.W.A.P. directory/collection of a Girl Scout Leader

<http://trudyd.homestead.com/swaps.html>

Color pictures and printed instructions for some simple S.W.A.P. ideas

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

Loads of ideas here